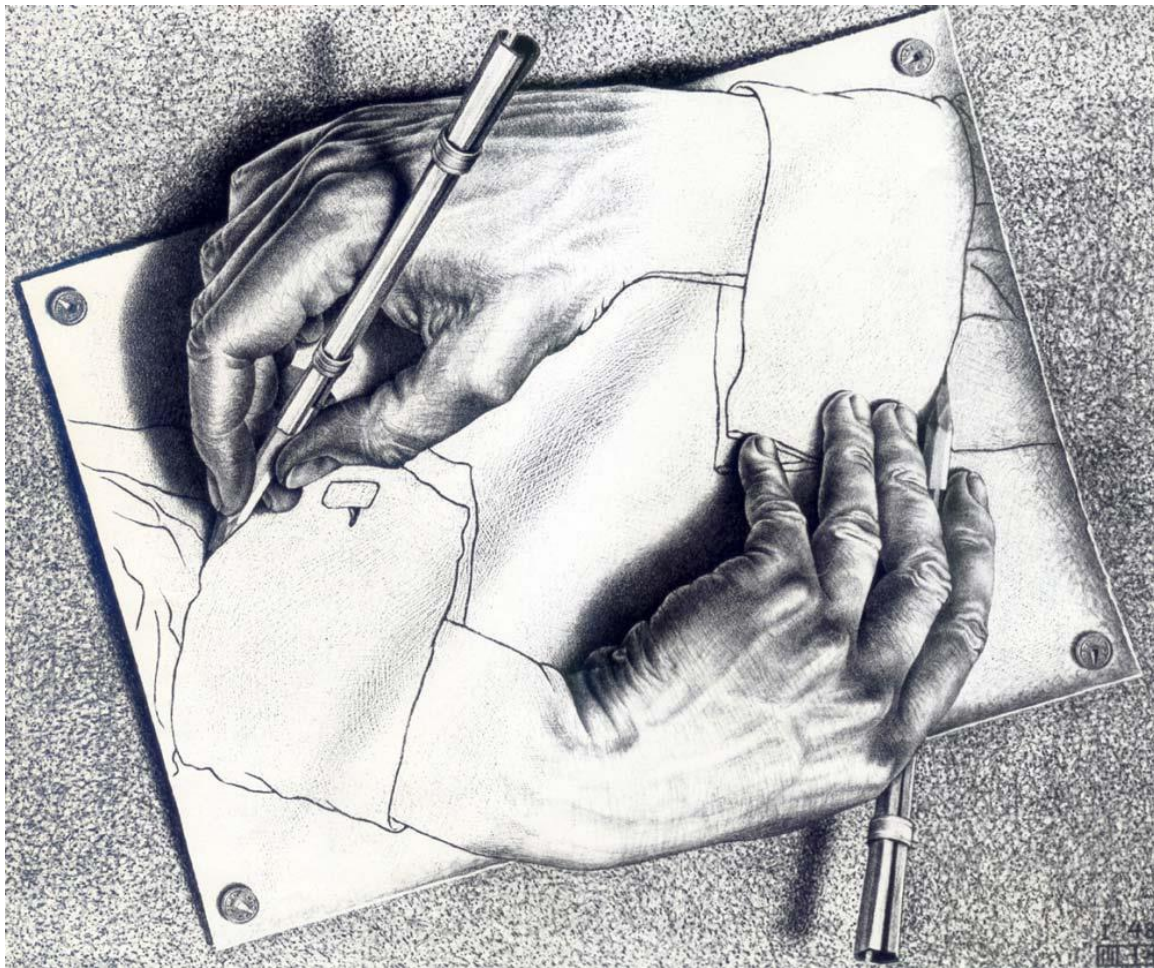


Pen & Pencil Magazine

Theme: The Unknown Future



Volume Six: Summer 2021

Volume Six: Pen & Pencil Magazine

© Pen & Pencil 2021,
Obelisk Press
Vancouver, BC, Canada

All rights reserved.

This magazine or any part thereof must not be reproduced in any form without the written permission of the magazine Editorial Board.

Cover picture: Escher, Two Hands

If you have a submission for the **Pen & Pencil Magazine** feel free to contact the Editor in Chief at

pbruskiewich @ gmail.com.

Table of Content

Pen & Pencil Welcomes Submissions	6
Short Stories.....	7
Why I Can't Vote for the Liberals by Isabella Montsouris.....	8
A Strange Chess Pair – Duchamp and Babitz by Ani Gavani	13
Companions of Youth by Veronica Collins	26
Communion with the Vegetables by Ben Linkenwich	29
En Française.....	34
La Route Obscure par Marcel Arland	35
Une lettre de Guillaume Apollinaire, Mars, 1917.....	39
Mon Bouquet au Surrealism par Pierre-Albert Birot	40
A Play.....	44
The Birth of Samuel by Patrick Bruskiewich	45
Canadiana.....	151
Is Prohibition Coming to England? by Stephen Leacock	152
Seven Poems by Isabella Yalancy Crawford (1846-1887)	165
Five Poems by Charles G. D. Roberts (1860-1943).....	176
Japanese Organic Art from the 1930's	182
Prose.....	183
Bottle Found at Sea by Louis Aragon	184
Painting as a Pastime by Sir Winston Churchill	190
Creative Death by Henry Miller.....	209
A Conversation with Gertrude Stein by John Preston	222

The Wardrobe by Thomas Mann (1899).....	238
The Big Lie About Beautiful Women by Louie Bolinger	250
Things I learned yesterday: grilled bull penis is not delicious.....	259
In Search for a Harem In Dubai	260
Mathematics and Science.....	261
The Mathematical Creation by Henri Poincaré.....	262
History.....	280
Another Look at Atlantis by Willy Ley	281
Poetry	297
In a Café by Will Bray	298
It's a Toil, that we know by Aki Kurosawa	299
Five Short Poems by Simon Perchik.....	301
The Mix of a Perfect Martini by William Webster	306
Midnight Nekyia by Joseph Jon	307
J'ai Perdu Mon Paris ... Hélas! by Rose Lang	308
Mountains are Forever by Susan Dale	309
I Would Rather Sleep Alone by Annie Gavani	313
You Don't Seem to Care ... by Isabella Montsouris	314
Art	317
Boy oh Boy ... by Ani Gavani	318
Ceci n'est pas par Patrick Bruskiewich.....	326
Twenty Four Hours in the Life of Chloe by Ani Gavani	387
Novella.....	398
A Midsummer's Night Dream by Patrick Bruskiewich.....	399

Magazines by Obelisk Press

Le Minotaur
Pen & Pencil Magazine
Poetic Voice Magazine
Art & Eros Magazine
L'Espionage
Dada Magazine
Genius Magazine
Neos et Le Suralisme

Affiliated Publishing Houses

Obelisk Press
Atelier Press
Pythagoras Publishing

Over 300 titles to choose from

“What we leave me behind is not as important as how we’ve lived.”

Capt. Jean Luc Picard



THE PROLOGUE

Pen & Pencil Welcomes Submissions

Obelisk Press of Vancouver is proud to publish the Sixth edition of *Pen & Pencil Magazine* which serves to feature the work of aspiring writers. The *Pen & Pencil Magazine* welcomes submissions on a quarterly basis.

A special thank you to the writers who contributed to this edition. For several of our contributors, it is their first occasion to be published. Congratulations! In this edition we also include several Surréal French pieces found in avant-garde magazines from the 1920's and 1930's.

The *Pen & Pencil Magazine* board is comprised of the unpaid volunteers: Please feel free to send your short story, prose, poetry and artwork submissions to the Editor in Chief at

pbruskiewich @ gmail.com.

There is no fee to submit. There is no writer's fee provided by the journal for those who submit. The publishing rights remain with the writer.

The theme for the **Winter 2021** edition of *Pen & Pencil Magazine* will be set by the contributors and their submissions.

Short Stories

Why I Can't Vote for the Liberals by Isabella Montsouris

[**Montreal**] With Covid still here and Catholic Churches being burned in Western Canada, we have had a long hot summer in Canada. Yes, you heard me right ... Catholic Churches being burned to the ground! No it's not the 1960's and this isn't the Deep South with it's racial violence, it is intolerance of a different kind and it has convinced me I cannot vote for the Liberals.

You see I am Catholic and well, the burning of Churches by Native Canadians is inexcusable for whatever reason. God forbid, if someone burnt down a long house there would be arrests made and people sent to jail. The press would be screaming of racism and a whole lot more.

The burning of Catholic Churches has turned many Québeckers against *les autochtones* (we call them *autochtones* here in Québec). Now, some months after the Church burnings there have been no arrests and the whole thing has all but been swept under the carpet by the Liberal Government in Ottawa. Over the past year there have also been over a hundred hate crimes against Catholic churches and statues. And other statues have been torn down by angry people in Toronto and Winnipeg, and elsewhere, statues of Prime Minister John A. McDonald. It is like we have become crazy Americans!

And to make matters worse, our Catholic Prime Minister has called a fall election! I am still trying to understand why he would do this during the Covid pandemic. Sure Justin Trudeau comes from Quebec and sure he is a

Rock Star in the eyes of some younger women, but I am now nearly thirty and I don't think with my sex any more (or at least not as often as I use to). And because I haven't gone out on a date for ages, I have gotten used to finding my own pleasures in life and not looking for them in others. I am more an individual now than ever before.

My emotions as a young woman have also changed. This past year I have had to struggle to pay my rent and buy food to put on my table. I haven't gone out in ages and watch films off the internet instead of at the theaters. I lost two of my three part time jobs because of the pandemic, and fortunate for me, my third job working in a grocery store has keep me busy, but the salary there is not as good as the salary and tips I received as a waiter at two restaurants.

I am a check-out clerk and do some stocking, but the way we relate to people at a grocery store is so different than the way we relate to people in a restaurant. Working as a waiter kept me in touch with people. I had my regulars who came to the breakfast restaurant I worked at.

And in the evenings, in my off the shoulder black short cocktail dress I enjoyed the attention that men gave me as I ushered them to their tables at the sports bar-restaurant (I have long legs and am told I am pretty). And no, I would not let them "pick-me up." The sports bar had had too many problems in the past with hook-ups so they had a policy, you had to decide to work for them or ... 'to work for yourself,' (wink-wink). Several girls worked a few weeks until they found someone to "look after them." Many

have tried with me, and I have had to slap a few for being too insistent ... and the bouncer has had to toss a few out ... and I know there is a bet that I only like girls ... but I wear my Catholic cross with honor, and say that I am waiting to meet the right man, settle down and get married, and then have children. Two of my friends have already become mothers and they aren't married. One kept the child and the other cries incessantly.

I know ... you can't expect to meet the right man at a sports-bar restaurant. Despite the fact the manager calls me twice a week to ask me back, I think it is time for me to hang my off the shoulder black short cocktail dress, and only wear it on a special occasion.

Lucky for me I have my grocery store job. I use to make \$ 4,000 a month, now I barely make \$ 2,500. My loss in income is partly made up by the generosity of our grocery store manager who has given all her employees a discount on food purchases that I can make ends meet. My grocery bill is two-thirds of what it used to be, and I have become a vegetarian because meat is now too expensive for me. Since I was working nearly full time, I could not apply for one of the CERB things – which was a bit of a disappointment, because I could have stayed home and been safe and received more money from the Government, then I would have earned working at my job at the grocery store.

Despite all that has been happening around me, it has been the burning of churches that has most upset me. I cannot say I am really that religious, but to help get me through my dreary days I have prayed more often than when

times were good. When I was young my mother told me that God could not help you if you did not tell God what help you need. When I pray it helps me sort out the jumble of my emotions and helps me to better understand what I need to do to make it through my days. When the pandemic is finally over I think I will attend church more often. Since I went to CEGEP I have only gone to church for weddings, baptisms and funerals – including the funeral of my grandmother last year who died of Covid at one of the seniors homes in Quebec ... The excuse I would give my grandmother was ... I am too busy.

My grandmother knew how much I would worry if I knew she was ill and so when she came down with Covid she protected me by not telling me how ill she was. When I was out enjoying St. Jean Baptiste Day last June with my closest friend, after I got home my mother texted me to tell me my grandmother had died. She had not suffered much. It took her in just a few days. She had simply closed her eyes and lay in her bed and prayed not for herself ... but for me.

I cried for a week. I could not attend her funeral because of Covid restrictions ... but I now visit her every Sunday morning on my way to work, and I kneel and pray at her grave. Her loss to me has provided me a better sense of what is going on here in Canada.

She wrote me a last letter (actually she told someone else what she wanted to say to me and they wrote the letter for her). In that letter she reminded me to be Catholic first and foremost, and to continue be kind and generous, as

Catholics are. She also left me an inheritance for a rainy day. I keep it in the bank untouched.

It was only when the election was called for September 20th that I noticed that the two men who are hoping to be Prime Minister are both Catholics. My grandmother was more Conservative in her views than I have been, but my grandmother was in so many ways wiser than I am. As I get older I am getting wiser in my thoughts and actions.

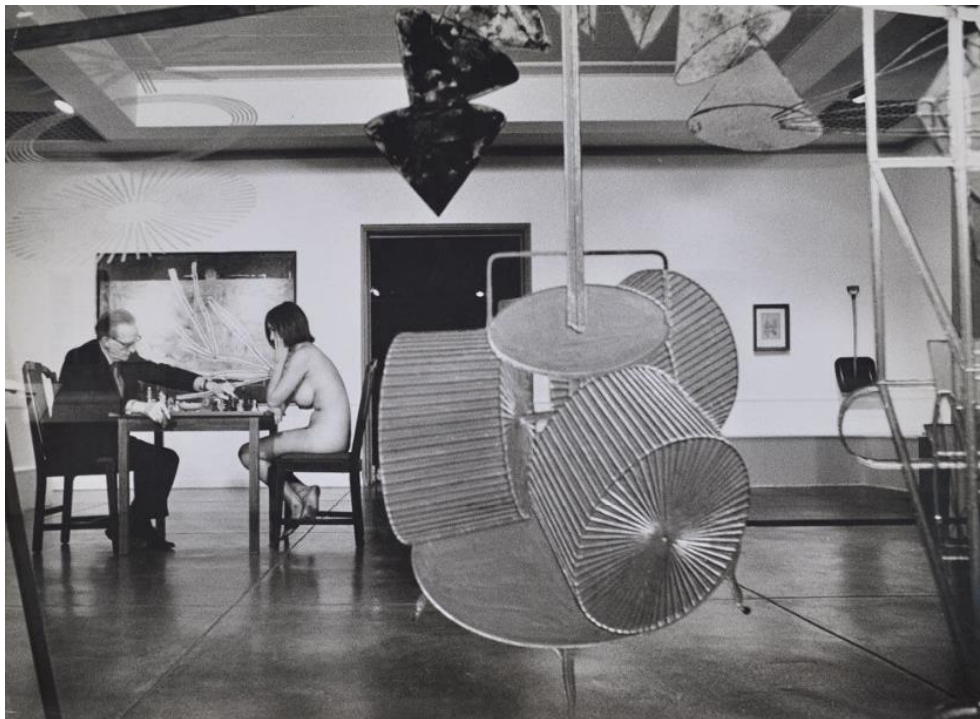
With her last letter my grandmother also left me her rosary and her little bible. I wear her rosary around my neck and close to my heart and I have her bible on the night table next to my bed, sitting just in front of her picture in a silver frame she gave me when I graduated from CEGEP. She is who I see every morning when I wake up and every evening when I turn the light off to go to sleep.

It is time for me to settle down like my grandmother. She married at age thirty and had my mother and my uncle. It is also time for me to be wise like my grandmother ... rock stars are entertainers, not the moral leaders of the world.

On the Sunday before the Federal Election I plan to go to Church and pray to God and hope that my prayers are answered.

A Strange Chess Pair – Duchamp and Babitz by Ani Gavani

One of the strangest photographs from a rather bizarre decade, the 1960's, is the pictorial of the elderly French Surréalist Marcel Duchamp and the youthful American writer Eve Babitz sitting playing chess at the Pasadena Art Museum.



Duchamp and Babitz playing chess, 1963

If you have not seen this iconic photograph, I would be surprised. It can only mean that neither art nor art history is of interest to you. This unique photograph is described by the Smithsonian Archives of American Art as being "*among the key documentary images of American modern art*".

The photomontage was taken within a gallery that surrounds the two with some of Duchamp's Surréal art. They sat playing amid the set-up of a retrospective showing with pieces of Duchamp's Dada, Surréal and found art, that spanned a half century of his artistry – from the 1910's to the 1960's.

By the time the picture of the fully clothed Marcel Duchamp and the naked Eve Babitz sitting playing chess was taken, in 1963, Duchamp had been in self-imposed retirement ... for want of inspiration and continued companionship. He was an old and lonely man. Most of Duchamp's friends had either passed away or moved on to other forms of artistry.

By the early 1960's the Surrealist Movement which had begun and flourished three decades prior, was not necessarily dead, it was just dormant. The main actors such as Duchamp, Man Ray and Dali were not as busy as they once were in their youth, and the market for their works was all but satiated.

Following the 1963 Duchamp Retrospective and the renewed artistry of personalities like Salvador Dali, the Surréal World would change considerably.

A Surréalist Resurgence was slowly launched and it appears to have been inadvertent, coinciding to a great extent with the unbridled sexuality of the 1960's. While it may be easy to suggest that Duchamp was responsible for this resurgence, in retrospective it was perhaps a young and beautiful woman

named Eve that lead the Adams of the Surréalist Movement back into Paradise. This perhaps why this photomontage is so unique for its time. Only a handful of pictures were taken by Wasser in the space of a thirty minute long chess game. The two chatted while they played. One of things they chatted about was Babitz's grandfather the composer Stravinsky and Firebirds, and his dalliances with Coco Chanel

The year 1963 is a rather significant year for the study of Popular Culture in the United States. It was the year of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy and the suicide of Marilyn Monroe. It was the year of the Mercury Astronauts in orbit around the Earth. It was the year that D.H. Lawrence's book *Lady Chatterly's Lover* was deemed to be artistic, not pornographic. It is the year that Hugh Hefner's Play Boy Magazine sold like hot cakes. It is the year that Ian Fleming's James Bond appeared on the big screen in *Goldfinger*. It is the year sexuality burned like a hot prairie fire.

I think 1963 should also be remembered as the year that a beautiful twenty year old Eve woman took off her dress, brassiere and panties and sat proudly and defiantly opposite an icon of the Surréalist Movement, playing out a surreal game of chess.

And all the while as the two played with each other the burley and sweating workmen brought in the exhibit pieces, smirking to themselves in amazement at what they saw. The Gallery Manager, Walter Hopps, was nowhere to be seen and did not know this chess game was being played out.

Eve Babitz's sexual relationship with the much older Gallery Manager was part of the drama.



Duchamp had met and talked with Walter Hopps before the chess game, but met Eve Babitz only moments before the photomontage were taken.

As they sat together the Frenchman Marcel Duchamp had no understanding of the motivation of why a young woman would want sit naked and played chess with him, perhaps thinking it was *une Action Surréale* for a Surréal Retrospective exhibit. The photography had proposed the idea to the two subjects of the photomontage. Duchamp was not aware of the sexual tension between the twenty year old Eve and the decade older, and married Walter Hopps. Eve loved the idea of the nude chess game, and knew that she would be getting under Hopp's skin while doing something that would bring her fame and notoriety.

Eve would later admit that ... there was method to her madness.



Duchamp and Hopps discussing the Retrospective Exhibit, 1963



Marcel Duchamp emphasizing a point, Retrospective, 1963



Marcel Duchamp pointing to the Urinal, Retrospective, 1963

In the early 1960s, Hopps, who was then married to art historian Shirley Nielsen, began an affair with the young Eve. Just when it started no one knows. Rumor has it that Babitz and Hopps had had sex when she was just the age of consent ...



Eve Babitz, circa 1959

By 1963 Hopps was also making advances towards Eve's younger 17-year-old sister Miranda, although it appears with less success. It was in the midst

of Hopp's lust for two Babitz girls that Eve played her moves. It was also her first brush with sex and notoriety.



Eve Babitz, circa 1963

Eve claims that she didn't receive an invite to the Duchamp's Retrospective opening at the Hotel Green because Walter Hopps's suspicious wife was in town, but Babitz's younger sister Miranda, got to attend. Arrangements were made by Hopps for photographer Julian Wasser to drive Miranda to the opening. The lothario Julian Wasser was a figurative photographer who enjoyed taking pictures of young women.

Seething with envy towards Hopps, Babitz wanted to take revenge on her paramour. Wasser, who was known for taking nude photographs of young women, suggested a titillating form of retribution: playing chess in the nude, with Duchamp at the museum.

Babitz told the Archives of American Art that the proposition seemed “like the best idea I’d ever heard in my life....I mean, it was, not only was it vengeance, it was art.” Lessening her own inhibitions, perhaps, was the fact that Wasser had already shot her naked, at her own command: To stoke amorous fires Eve had requested and Wasser had obliged to take sexy snapshots of her to share with men.

Let deal with a few misconceptions, shall we. It was not of Duchamp’s doing that this nude pictorial came about. It was foisted upon Marcel Duchamp within the Gallery by both Babitz and the photographer Julian Wasser, neither of whom he had met until they walked up to him in the gallery, introduced themselves and then proposed the photoshoot. Wasser was doing a photo layout of the Duchamp Retrospective for Time Magazine.

Wasser coordinated the photo shoot without alerting either the museum or Duchamp about his intentions. During the chess game, Babitz and Duchamp discussed her godfather, Stravinsky, and his famous 1910 suite, *The Firebird*.

Duchamp won their speed chess games as Wasser clicked his shutter. Towards the end of the game, Hopps walked into the gallery and was so surprised that his jaw hit the floor. According to Babitz, he began returning her calls after the incident.

Wasser showed Babitz the proofs. She enjoyed them and selected one in which she was turned away from the camera, her face obscured by her

bobbed hair, for general circulation. At first, she wanted to conceal her identity from the public, though she eventually opened up about her participation in the famous photograph. Her picture showed conveyed both shyness and exhibitionism, a plea for both attention and anonymity.

Why a game of chess? ... Chess is considered the universal game of the Surréalists (oh and the Dadaists as well ... if you insist for distinctions ...)

Duchamp was famous for many of his art pieces including his submissions to the 1913 Amory showing which included four pieces including *Nu qui Descendant l'Escalier*. Today the piece is in the collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Wasser used this as a conceptual starting point in putting together the photoshoot.

It was Wasser's idea to do the nude photoshoot and the both Wasser and Babitz foisted the idea on Duchamp of a surreal game of chess. I don't know of any seventy-six year old male artist who would turn down such an offer.

Duchamp himself described what prompted this type of art by him:

“In 1912 ... the idea of describing the movement of a nude coming downstairs while still retaining static visual means to do this, particularly interested me. The fact that I had seen chronophotographs of fencers in action and horse galloping (what we today call stroboscopic photography) gave me the idea for the Nude. It doesn't mean that I copied these photographs. The Futurists were also

interested in somewhat the same idea, though I was never a Futurist. And of course the motion picture with its cinematic techniques was developing then too. The whole idea of movement, of speed, was in the air”.



Duchamp, Nu qui Descendant l’Escalier

Duchamp is also remembered for doing the Adam and Eve pictorial in 1925



**Adam and Eve , Marcel Duchamp &
Brogna Perlmütter, Man Ray 1925**

At the Retrospective, a table with the chess set was the central piece in one of the galleries of the exhibit and it had been intended that Duchamp would sit and play chess with visitors to his Retrospective. The artist himself would be *un tableau vivant*.

Hopps played chess with Duchamp, at the opening of the Retrospective the day after the Surréal game with Eve Babitz. This is one of the pictures that appeared in the local media of Duchamp playing chess with Hopps..



You have to wonder what Marcel Duchamp was thinking after he won the game!



By the end of the Retrospective Exhibit Marcel Duchamp had fitted together all the pieces in the puzzle of Eve Babitz and Walter Hopps. He knew then that Eve had played him like a chess piece and that she had been an artist and an instigator.

But what makes the Retrospective memorable are the photographs that Wasser took of the Surréal Chess Game. .



Companions of Youth by Veronica Collins

“When I have fears that I may cease to be...” - John Keats

Do you remember? The hayfields bright and crackling beneath that big sky sun? The way our skirts caught, snagged on the burnt- out rosebushes of June, the spit beetles’ stickiness smearing our bare legs? How the horizon line lay so low to the overwhelming sky?

At the sinking before the hills was the gully where you met the black bear. Typical you, to turn around and walk slowly back up the knotted dirt road – steady, steady – never running till you saw the farm buildings two miles away finally come into view.

I always wanted to be like you. Calm like the dugout before a rainstorm. The same blue- grey mirrors in your eyes.

We used to go to the creek after haying or harvesting: hot and sticky, with scrapes tingling on our skin and dirt under our nails. You always dove right in – icy water, leeches lurking in the mud, oil floating in iridescent circular rainbows under the wooden trestle bridge.

Do you remember the way your Dad would organize campfires down by the creek? In the northern summer evenings, doing battle with mosquitoes while carving out the perfect roasting stick with his Swiss Army knife, his Texan

drawl melting into the late evening sun. Deceptive warmth and light: it seemed we were all in the south, with catfish trolling above the leeches.

You had such great stories about the south.

On rainy days we used to sit by that thin window that looked out across the entire green- drenched landscape and pour over books of wildlife paintings. You could create the perfect jeweled hummingbird on the sketchpad page, no bigger than a thumbnail, all ruffled breast in soft dark pencil. And fawns out of charcoal. Delicate lady's slippers from a finely- sharpened point. We could only find the flowers' drooping heads deep in the woods, in clearings which we visited secretively from time to time.

Sometimes we had to hang the clothes inside on spring days like those; fire up the woodstove to sauna temperatures and beat back damp wisps of hair while carrying aprons full of clothes pegs, sliding heavy baskets of wet garments across the warped wood floor. You had a small girl's voice that was capable of reaching epic heights in that echoing space. A four- foot- ten diva doing laundry in the wilderness.

Do you remember the story club? The innocent pages spread out on the bedroom floor? The notebook with its listing of collaborations?

Or the way we would steal the hammer from the toolbox to pound pansies into the sawed- off ends of the log cabins, creating imprints of flowers in the wood?

That portrait of Her Majesty over those outdated encyclopedias in the school
foyer.

The butter churn's habit of dancing across the linoleum as its motor
ka- chunked and whirred.

The way they called the cows in the mornings.

The meaning of hoarfrost.

The water barrels underneath the eaves and the beetles swimming in them.

I remember the grace of a rainbow over the forest.

The heartache at the afternoon darkness in January.

But the way you laughed in the kitchen... ..it still reverberates now.

{First published in *This Great Society*, Feb. 2010

Communion with the Vegetables by Ben Linkenwich

I tread the earth alone, enjoying dirt. Square sixteen, and you've discovered the plot with which I gladly wrestle, two hundred and fifty-six square feet of pure potential. Yes, I am a gardener. For a mound of good soil is a heaven-sent, heap-of-raw-joy harbinger of simple blessings and happy guinea pigs, and a tended garden is a heart full of love, formed by the kisses of rain and sun, still trailing God's glory more than we.

Each gardener is uniquely called to the glorious quest, and I'm no exception: a self-confessed chronologically-warped groupie of medieval mystics with a strong and abiding affection for Latin names on the side, I'm enamoured with growing vegetables. When Hildegard von Bingen goes on about the mystical greenness of being, I experience the veriditas with her. And I know the meaning of work, partaking in the direct experience of what the Franciscan Friars would have done, vigorously tossing bits of vegetation into the ground and praying it all works out in the end.

I've also experienced the potential for acquiring vast amounts of pedantic knowledge – botanical names, optimal growing conditions, endless varieties – and the accompanying tiffs that go with it. For example, I declare, on threat of fisticuffs with many other gardeners, that tomatoes are by no means a fruit! Botanists are horribly mistaken, for tomatoes have the form and soul of a vegetable, and mere flower design does not a vegetable un-make.

Furthermore, to garden is to partake in all the human passions and pursuits, in a toned-down, relaxing microcosm, and my little plot exemplifies this: the stoic effort that is weeding and digging-over builds character and a tough sort of optimism. The passionate love that goes into the seeding process of vegetable gardening comes replete with hope and fear, faith and expectation. From my toiling at hauling soil, to my plunging of fingers into black, loamy earth, to my coaxing the seeds along – “Come on guys, you can do it! Grow, my little carrot friends!” – to keeping a strict watering schedule, raising my plants is to raise my little green children, in a metaphor I must stop abruptly.

And gardening creates epic sagas.

Dramatically, I grow rhubarb. After two attempts to kill it, the pathos got to me and I don’t have the heart any more. The rhubarb is mainly inedible. It crowds out my herb garden. It doesn’t respond when I’m nice to it. But there it grows, succeeding in spite of me.

In the same spirit, I accidentally grew mint a few years ago, and have been uprooting yards of it every year, trying to do it in. Up it comes, every spring, enthusiastic as ever to expand its fragrant empire.

There are also surprises: last year, the amazingly huge squash that “volunteered” in the compost and created gigantic flowers from which many squashlets sprung turned out to be Vancouver’s largest vine of mini-pumpkins, fifty of them. My failure to suss the provenance of my enthusiastic charge exposed me to public ridicule, mainly from those to

whom I'd promised a squash from my forecasted plenty. There's a parable in there, somewhere.

On the other end of the spectrum, my herb garden, composed mainly of chives, parsley, green onions, and dill, the only herbs I can grow consistently without doing transplants, will not admit new members. Some spindly oregano has come up this year, a year late, and I rejoice with it, but fear for its safety, lest it go the way of the basil and so many others.

Creeping up a notch, potatoes, peppers, and watermelons are all return hopefuls, whose forbearers have grown in the past but have yet to produce a single fruit among them. Each has an excuse: the potatoes were irradiated, a horrible fate, the peppers unhappy with pH, drainage, food, or heat, and the watermelons underfed and planted late. I pray, persist, and experiment.

I do try and keep the tension of hope and uncertainty palpable in the air. I attempt something new every season – this year it's celery and great purple kohlrabi – and try out an underperformer, like leeks.

In the end, the bulk of my joy comes from the friends tried-and-true. Every year, I grow the Vegetable Kingdom's Greatest Hits: peas, tomatoes (a record ten varieties), beets, pole beans, lettuce, spinach, and carrots – multitudes of them all, and multitudes upon multitudes of the last.

Soon my family and friends, and particularly my guinea pigs, will partake of the bountiful harvest. The freshest peas, nectar of Olympus, come by the

bucketful every day. Salads and stir-fries spring from it, as do the nicest pickled carrots and beets under the sun. July through October sees gladness writ anew upon our hearts every day.

Feel the joy? Feel the joy. Garden!

{First published in *This Great Society*, June 2010}



The Curtain rises.

En Française

La Route Obscure par Marcel Arland

Je l'avouerais naïvement: ma plus grande surprise fut de constater que je n'étais pas seul au monde. Parfois, sentant à mon côté une autre présence, je serrais les dents pour ne point crier d'effroi. D'autres êtres avaient mes gestes, un corps semblable au mien; je me suis cru mal éveillé d'un terrible cauchemar; ces fantômes m'ont accablé, pourchassé dans les rues, singé dans mes idées. La honte courbait ma tête; j'étendais le bras en tremblant: autour de moi des formes ironiques répétaient ce mouvement, comme si j'eusse été au centre d'un jeu de glaces.

Et quand ces êtres m'apparaissaient plus nettement, et que je les connaissais en leur particularité, leur allure devenait si formidable que je renonçais à moi-même et désirais de mourir.

Aussi prenais-je conscience de moi-même et du monde. Ce double contact me fut d'une perpétuelle étrangeté.

Nulle part je ne me suis senti à ma place. Mon isolement m'a rendu l'abord des hommes un insupportable malaise. En quel endroit du monde, auprès de quel être ne fus-je un étranger! J'aurais voulu fuir, mais la curiosité ou quelque misérable besoin de tendresse me retenaient.

Les femmes avaient des pas hardis et des cambrures spéciales; dans nos rencontres leur premier regard était la mesure de la distance qui me séparait d'elles; qu'elles sourient ou qu'elles ramènent sur leurs seins un geste de

secret, c'était toujours pour moi, et souvent jusqu'à la souffrance, le heurt de deux mondes, avec le goût de la bouche, le nom du frère et la plage où elles avaient passé l'été.

(Un jour, s'arrachant de mon étreinte, 5... prit entre ses mains ma tête, qu'elle regarda profondément. Mon ami, dit-elle, c'est vous, est-ce bien vous ? Nous nous tutoyions depuis longtemps et je l'enviai de s'être à ce point rendu compte, et dans un tel instant, de notre monstrueuse dissemblance).

Au centre des forêts, j'ai vu certains arbres dont les feuilles, à la cime, remuaient éternellement. Ce n'était point qu'un souffle imperceptible les émût, mais plutôt leur particulier agencement, une sève inquiète ou quelque sensibilité extrême à la température.

Je n'oppresserai pas d'un mot ce trouble perpétuel de notre égoïsme, qui est la plus belle raison de vivre, mise à part la lâcheté, (Je crains les mots; ils trahissent la pensée, comme la voix les trahit eux-mêmes).

Toute différence que je constatais entre le monde et moi, me froissait en une intime pudeur. Je ramenais ma vie active à ce froissement; il effaçait pour moi le sens des mots : bonheur et infortune. J'ai cherché ardemment ma propre honte et celle des autres; la plus misérable chaumière a fait battre mon cœur, car j'y pressentais des pudeurs inconnues.

Mais derrière les individus, c'était un engrenage que je percevais, et derrière ces volontés qui se croyaient libres une fatalité et des lois secrètes.

Les foules, portées par le même dieu triste, coulaient comme une bave noirâtre au long des boulevards, sanglotaient devant les mélodrames des théâtres, s'endormaient à la même heure, la conscience satisfaite.

Des femmes, gracieuses jusqu'à la désolation, et de jeunes hommes inspirés mêlaient leurs corps selon le rythme des sexes et des musiques, comme des marionnettes solennelles et émouvantes.

Ije voyais tout un peuple sombre, ardent et ébahi se pâmer vers les musiques militaires, vers les drapeaux, vers les fêtes populaires; je devinais quelques grands mots : amour, honneur, élégance, tendus dans l'ombre comme d'énormes ressorts.

En chaque être je fus poussé à voir autre chose que lui-même; je m'expliquais chacun de ses gestes par sa nécessité ; et dans un faubourg perdu, au printemps, cette jeune fille qui soudain cambre les reins, puis rougit et marche plus vite, ce n'est plus elle que je perçois, mais sa famille, sa classe, son âge, son métier et son sexe.

Non pas que du mécanisme des êtres, à quoi j'assistais comme à un spectacle, je me sentisse indépendant. Devant ces vastes mouvements et cette fatalité, prenais-je conscience de ma liberté ou de ma sujétion? Je n'ai point l'orgueil d'échapper à toutes ces lois. L'important était de les constater; même en y cédant, j'éprouvais alors une jouissance d'égoïsme.

(Et c'est ainsi qu'une émotion nous est surtout sensible la deuxième fois; car la première fois nous en sommes étonnés; mais la deuxième, nous y percevons déjà le mécanisme; la troisième fois nous intéresse moins, car nous en avons l'habitude. La plus importante découverte d'une âme, et la plus ingénue, c'est peut-être celle du nombre 2 ; il est le commencement de la prostitution et de la règle ; je l'ai retrouvé partout, dans la vertu comme dans le vice, dans le rythme des phrases, dans les plus belles œuvres d'art comme dans les pires grossièretés).

Feu de sentiments sont aussi violents que celui de la déchéance humaine, sinon celui de sa propre déchéance.

{First published in *Surréalisme*, No. 1, 1924}

Une lettre de Guillaume Apollinaire, Mars, 1917

(L'Esprit Nouveau, qui prépare un numéro très important consacré à la mémoire d'Apollinaire, nous communique cette lettre adressée à notre ami Dermée. Elle confirme pleinement la thèse soutenue lors d'une récente polémique dans le Journal Littéraire).

Mon cher Dermée,

Très bien votre manifeste du Nord-Sud; nous en avons beaucoup parlé avec Max chez Level, l'autre dû vous dire combien nous étions. Vous avez eu raison d'insister sur la nécessité d'une prochaine période d'organisation du lyrisme.

Et aussi d'une contrainte intérieure, poésie, c'est-à-dire à toute création; « l'étrange magie des mots » à son. Tout bien examiné, je crois, en effet, qu'il vaut mieux adopter surréalisme que surnaturalisme que lisme n'existe pas encore dans les dictionnaires, et il sera plus commode à manier que surnaturalisme déjà utilisé par MM. les Philosophes.

J'ai écrit quelques pages là-dessus pour le Mercure, soit une préface à un prochain livre. Pourquoi n'êtes-vous pas venu

Ma main amie.

Mon Bouquet au Surrealism par Pierre-Albert Birot

Vous avez certainement quelque chose à dire sur le surréalisme, faites-moi l'article pour ce soir, je viendrai le chercher cet après-midi à 5 heures. C'est Ivan Goll qui me parle ainsi.

Ai-je quelque chose à dire sur le surréalisme ? Quant au mot, sans doute, puisque nous l'avons, Apollinaire et moi, choisi et fixé ensemble. C'était au printemps 1917, nous rédigeons le programme des Mamelles et sous le titre nous avons d'abord écrit « drame » et ensuite je lui ai dit : ne pourrions-nous pas ajouter quelque chose à ce mot, le qualifier, et il me dit en effet mettons surnaturaliste et aussitôt je me suis élevé contre surnaturaliste qui ne convenait point au moins pour trois raisons et naturellement avant même que j'eusse fini l'exposé de la première Apollinaire était de mon avis et me disait : « Alors mettons surréaliste ». C'était trouvé.

Quant à la chose je n'aime guère en parler, je trouve plus de joie à faire qu'à dire. Pourtant il sera bientôt 5 heures, je me lance dans les considérations générales.

Si faire œuvre de poète est DIRE quelque chose artistement, il y a dans l'histoire littéraire du monde une foule de poètes.

Si faire œuvre de poète est sous l'émotion de ce que l'on a à DIRE en inventer l'expression, il en existe bien peu dans l'histoire littéraire du monde et un seul en France jusqu'à la fin du XIX^e siècle: Villon.

Si faire œuvre de poète est non plus DIRE quelque chose, mais faire un poème, il n'en existe pas avant la fin du XIX e siècle : Mallarmé, Rimbaud, Laforgue, Apollinaire. C est le temps où commence le surréalisme, c'est-à-dire en réalité la poésie, tout ce qui est antérieur n'étant que devoirs prosodiques.

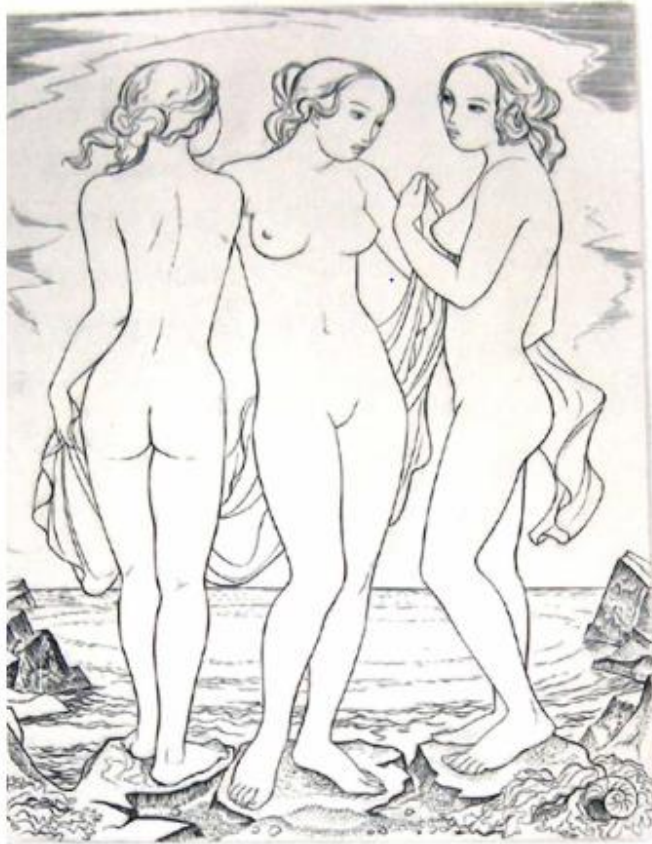
Pour mettre de l'ordre, voici ce que je dirai : Victor Hugo et Baudelaire = fin de la période scolaire. Mallarmé, Rimbaud, Laforgue, Apollinaire = période de transition qui contient des éléments de décadence d'une fin et les éléments de vie d'un commencement.

De cette transition partent deux courants : l'un puissant, qui coule largement, notre surréalisme, fait de tous les éléments de vie; l'autre les autres un petit bras puant qui a fort heureusement bien de la peine à se tracer un lit et qui est fait des éléments de décadence. Et je vous dis qu'il y a par là des relents de pourriture, enterrons la charogne.

Et voici mon bouquet au surréalisme.

{First published in *Surréalisme*, No. 1, 1924}

A fine collection of Art Books



Atelier Press

A growing collection of titles available at Amazon

Editor in Chief: Patrick Bruskiewich



**He kisses her on the bare
shoulder.**

A Play

The Birth of Samuel by Patrick Bruskiewich

Characters

Hannah, the First Wife

Angel Gabriel

Hannah Husband

Penninah, the Second wife

Boy and Girl, Penninah's children.

Three women, Sarah, Rachel and Maryam

Props

As outlined in play

ACT ONE

Scene One

Graveyard Mid-morning

[Hannah, dressed plainly, is walking barefoot towards a grave. She is holding a small bouquet of flowers.]

[The bright mid-morning sun is behind her and she is casting her shadow where she is walking.]

[The camera begins close behind her. She is walking forward. The wind is following her from behind. It starts as a breeze and then picks up in intensity into a whirlwind as she walks the ten steps towards the grave.]

[With each step the camera pulls back from her and opens the camera angle. When she gets to the grave she kneels and the wind suddenly dies. She sets the flowers down beside her to the right.]

[When the wind dies you can hear that Hannah is crying. She starts to clear the grave and then picks the flowers up and sets them down on the grave.]

[Then a shadow appears in front of her. She looks up at the shadow and is fearful. Hannah pauses for a moment before she looks back over her shoulder.]

[There is an apparition standing behind her but behind him is the sun and so she cannot see him distinctly.]

[She assumes it is her father.]

HANNAH

Hello ...

GABRIEL

Why are you crying little one?

HANNAH

Because I am sad.

GABRIEL

Why are you sad?

HANNAH

You know why ... today is my birthday.

GABRIEL

You should be happy on your birthday. After all it is the day you came into the world.

HANNAH

How can I be happy!

[she gives out a big sob.]

GABRIEL

Why?

HANNAH

You know why.

[Hannah dries her eyes with a handkerchief. Then she looks back again over her shoulder before continuing.]

HANNAH

It is also the day my mother died.

GABRIEL

Why should you be sad then? She brought you into this world.

HANNAH

I cannot be happy on this day.

GABRIEL

I think your mother would want you to be happy on your birthday.
Why are you sad then?

HANNAH

Because she is gone. My mother is dead.

GABRIEL

Your mother is in heaven with God.

HANNAH

I rather she be here with me.

GABRIEL

But your mother is here with you Hannah...

HANNAH

No she isn't! How can she be here with me? She is dead.

GABRIEL

But she is here with you!

HANNAH

How can she be here with me? She is buried here in this grave.

GABRIEL

Are you not thinking of her?

HANNAH

Yes.

GABRIEL

Do you not love her?

HANNAH

You know I do.

GABRIEL

Then is she not here in spirit? Your mother is within your heart, as she is within you.

[Hannah sobs]

GABRIEL

Your mother is within every part of you and what you do.

[Hannah drops her head]

HANNAH

But ... I never knew my mother.

GABRIEL

You know you look just like her.

[Hannah looks up at the apparition with a start]

HANNAH

Do I. Do I really look like my mother?

GABRIEL

Not only do you look like her ... you also have her mannerisms ...
he have her hopes ... and her fears.

[Hannah draws her hands close to her breasts]

HANNAH

Do I!

GABRIEL

And just like you she was scared to have a child.

HANNAH

Was she!

GABRIEL

Yes she was

HANNAH

Then why did she?

GABRIEL

So she could have you. So she could hold you in her arms.

HANNAH

She held me in her arms ...

GABRIEL

Yes and you both cried.

HANNAH

We both cried?

GABRIEL

Yes ... You out of fear and she out of joy. Her prayers to God had been answered.

[Hannah starts to cry]

GABRIEL

You cried because you were scared ... you were cold ... you were hungry. You could not understand what was happening to you.

HANNAH

I don't remember that.

GABRIEL

No new born babies do. You had been washed and your mother took you up in your swaddling clothes. You were very beautiful.

HANNAH

Was I?

GABRIEL

Yes. Your mother swayed you back and forth in her arms while that which comes after the birth left her body. Then the difficulties began ...

HANNAH

Difficulties?

GABRIEL

You had been born healthy and fine, but your mother knew then that she would not survive. We all knew. I prayed to God that she would be there to see you grow and become who you now are.

[Hannah covers her ears with her hands.]

HANNAH

Father ... do not tell me anymore!

GABRIEL

I am not your father but an angel sent here to speak to you. Are you listening Hannah?

[The apparition goes silent. There is a pause. A feather floats and lands before Hannah. She sees the feather and picks it up.]

GABRIEL

Then she held you to her breast.

[Hannah is silent]

GABRIEL

And you suckled ... and you stopped crying and fell asleep.

[Hannah gives out a big sigh]

GABRIEL

And as you slept she named you Hannah and said you are a gift from god. She prayed that God would look after you.

HANNAH

A gift from God but at what cost? Her life?

GABRIEL

Yours ... your mother knew what she was doing.

[Hannah leans forward and sets her forehead on the ground above her mother's grave.]

HANNAH

I am scared too ...

GABRIEL

I know little one. But you have no reason to be scared.

HANNAH

What if I die while giving birth ... just like my mother?

GABRIEL

You will not die Hannah.

[Hannah bolts upwards]

HANNAH

How do you know that?

GABRIEL

I just know ... You must have faith little one.

HANNAH

I do have faith! I pray to God morning and night.

GABRIEL

That I know ...

HANNAH

But still ... I am without child. Perhaps it is because I am are too scared?

GABRIEL

Perhaps ...

HANNAH

Perhaps I am meant to not have children.

GABRIEL

Do you not know the way to beget child.

HANNAH

Yes ... I must lie with my husband in the way that a man and a women does to beget child.

GABRIEL

Yes, a man and a women should share a bed together. But that is not all.

HANNAH

We do love each other. What else must there be?

GABRIEL

You must be with him at the right time and in the right way.

HANNAH

What mean you?

GABRIEL

To beget child you must lie with your husband at that exact middle hour between your letting of the blood.

HANNAH

Exact middle hour between ...

GABRIEL

Fourteen days after ... fourteen days before ... and at that exact middle hour.

HANNAH

I did not know that.

GABRIEL

Since you grew up without your mother no one has been there to tell you this.

HANNAH

Tell me what?

GABRIEL

That in what of you a baby is made, your uterus, is like the top of a sand clock, and your blood is like the sand keeping time.

[Hannah scoops a handful of sand and lets it drop from her hand watching the sand closely as it drops.]

HANNAH

I wonder

GABRIEL

At that middle hour your uterus is best ready to receive that which your husband contributes to make a baby.

HANNAH

Why only then?

GABRIEL

Then and only then is the time right to make a baby.

HANNAH

...why have you not told me this before?

GABRIEL

You have never asked, until today. At that moment fourteen days between that is when a child can be begot.

HANNAH

That is two days hence. We leave for Shiloh this morning.

GABRIEL

Then midway on the road to Shiloh ... you should lie with your husband.

HANNAH

And what of Penninah?

GABRIEL

Do not worry of her. She shall be so tired from the trip and from looking after her two children that she shall be fast sleep and not know.

HANNAH

She always provokes and torments me ...

GABRIEL

Ignore her!

HANNAH

I cannot do that.

GABRIEL

Why can you not ignore her?

HANNAH

She constantly reminds him that she has begot my husband two children ... and I have not.

GABRIEL

I think the two children remind him of that every day in their own way. They are constantly underfoot and a burden to him.

HANNAH

And Penninah pushes me aside whenever she can.

GABRIEL

Are you not your husband's first wife?

HANNAH

Yes.

GABRIEL

Does your husband not love you?

HANNAH

I think he does,

GABRIEL

When you go to Shiloh each year for the festival, does he not give you twice as much meat after the sacrifice of the bull, as he gives Penninah his second wife?

HANNAH

Yes he does.

GABRIEL

At the same time your husband is fair to his children too, for he gives one equal amount for the two children which he himself serves, and so you have two helpings, Penninah has one and the two children has one helping between them.

HANNAH

Yes ... my husband is fair.

GABRIEL

Have you known him to be anything but fair and kind and loving to you?

HANNAH

He has always been that to me, even as he courted me before we were married.

GABRIEL

Does he not pray for a child for you?

HANNAH

He prays.

GABRIEL

Does he not invite you into his bed?

HANNAH

He does ... but sometimes Penninah pushes in instead.

GABRIEL

When this happens then ... does your husband lie with Penninah?

HANAAH

No ... but then again if this happens he does not lie with me.

GABRIEL

Penninah is like a crow who pushes a sparrow out of the nest in the hope that she be seen as a sparrow.

HANNAH

And I am the sparrow?

GABRIEL

Yes. Lie with husband on the night two days hence while you are on the road, and half way to Shiloh. Penninah shall not interfere.

HANNAH

But ... I am still scared.

GABRIEL

Do not be scared little one ... God will protect you and you shall give birth to a son and you will be there to watch him grow ...

[Hannah turns back to the grave and she bows her head. At that very moment the angel spreads his wings and disappears.]

[A wind blows another feather in front of Hannah. She picks the feather up, and now holds one feather in each hand and turns to face the apparition but it has disappeared.]

[She stands and looks about first on the ground and then up into the sky, using her hand to block the sun. She still thinks it is her father. Hannah is agitated]

HANNAH

Father.

[Hannah starts to scurry back along the path looking all over.]

HANNAH

Father ... where are you?

[She approaches the camera. The camera zooms into her face and then her eyes. Her eyes are dilated as if she is fearful.]

HANNAH

I am alone ... where have you gone?

ACT TWO

Scene One

Road To Shiloh Early Evening

[They are on the road to Shiloh. There is a caravan of people including Hannah, Hannah's husband, Penninah, and two children riding on a donkey and who are under a parasol. They are the only ones with parasols].

[Penninah and the two children on the donkey are near the front of the caravan.]

The husband is in the middle of the caravan and Hannah is walking beside him. Hannah and her husband are walking arm in arm talking.]

[Penninah stops, looks back and wipes her hand across her brow.]

PENNINAH

I am tired, let us stop.

[The others continue past her and continue on. As he passes Penninah the husband speaks]

HUSBAND

Not yet. We are not quite half way to Shiloh.

PENNINAH

But I am tired ... let us stop.

[He stops and looks at Hannah]

HUSBAND

Are you tired Hannah?

HANNAH

I can go further. Husband, you tell us when to stop.

[The husband kisses Hannah and then turns back to face Penninah.]

HUSBAND

We will continue on.

PENNINAH

But I have to think of my little ones.

[He looks at the children]

HUSBAND

They are not just your children Penninah. They are my children too.

PENNINAH

I am their mother and I say we should stop!

HUSBAND

I am their father and it looks to me like they can go a bit further.

PENNINAH

Hus ...

[He interrupts her in a loud and firm voice.]

HUSBAND

ENOUGH! I say we continue on.

[he walks ahead leaving Hannah with Penninah]

PENNINAH

What have the two of you been talking about?

HANNAH

Who are you to ask?

PENNINAH

It is my right!

HANNAH

Your right! I am his first wife ...

[Penninah raises her voice]

PENNINAH

And I am the mother of his only children.

[The husband hears what Penninah has said to Hannah and turns back]

HUSBAND

Penninah, you do not need to constantly remind Hannah of that.

PENNINAH

But it is a fact.

HUSBAND

Nor do you constantly need to remind me of that either. Look after the children and leave Hannah in peace.

PENNINAH

Husband!

HUSBAND

That is enough from you Penninah. You will stop tormenting Hannah.

[He lifts his finger to get her to stop. For a moment there is silence. Her husband offers his hand to Hannah.]

HUSBAND

Hannah my love...come walk with me.

[Hannah walks ahead to join her husband, then they continue on their way down the road]

[Penninah hesitates to join them. She shrugs her shoulder as she looks at her children. She then takes a skin with water in it and takes a long drink.]

[She puts the skin back without offering any water to her children.]

YOUNG BOY

Mother may I have some water?

PENNINAH

Wait until we stop.

YOUNG GIRL

Mother may I have some water too.

PENNINAH

No! We are almost there. Keep up!

[Reluctantly Penninah takes the reins of the donkey. They continue on.]

Scene Two

Encampment Night

[The five of them are in a tent.]

[Penninah and her two children are fast asleep.]

[Each person is under their own skin blanket.] [On the right side of the husband is Hannah. On the left side is Penninah and past her the two children].

[Hannah faces her husband, Penninah faces away. Penninah is snoring.]

[There is a single oil lamp near the head of the place where the husband sleeps. It casts a pale light into the tent.

HUSBAND

Hannah ... Love ... are you still awake?

HANNAH

Yes, my husband.

HUSBAND

Are you not tired?

HANNAH

A little. And you?

HUSBAND

A little. Come share my bed.

HANNAH

But Penninah?

HUSBAND

She is fast asleep. Can you not hear her snoring?

[Hannah stands and moves closer to her husband taking her skin with her].

[She lays her skin out and before she can get under it he continues]

HUSBAND

Here now ... take that silly thing off.

HANNAH

And the children ...

[He looks over at the two children]

HUSBAND

They are all fast asleep like their mother. Fear nought!

HANNAH

Are you sure?

HUSBAND

I am sure. Penninah and the children are fast asleep.

[Hannah hesitates then lets her night dress drop and then hurries under the covers. They get close and intimate to each other.]

HUSBAND

You are so soft ...

HANNAH

Here give me your hand.

[Hannah presses his hands on her breasts]

HUSBAND

Such bounties ... I watched you while you suckled the children at your breasts. Penninah's children, those of Rachel and Sarah and Maryam too. You do so, so naturally.

HANNAH

If you remembered after the two were born were born Penninah soon ran dry.

HUSBAND

Given how she is ... you would think that would not happen ...

HANNAH

But she did run dry. Remember how she did not want me to wet nurse the two and you told her if they are not fed they shall soon perish.

HUSBAND

It is good you were here or we would have been need of another wet nurse.

HANNAH

Suckling babies is a woman's duty in a household that is shared.

HUSBAND

Not all woman want to bare their breasts when there are new borns about. The two children would have not survived without you.

HANNAH

You noticed that.

HUSBAND

I did and I thank you for being such a bountiful splendour.

[He pulls back the top of the skin blanket and kisses her breast]

HANNAH

Is that all I am then ...

HUSBAND

No, ... you look after the children as if you were their mother.

HANNAH

And to you ... what am I?

HUSBAND

You have always been a blessing to me. I have prayed ...

HANNAH

Then ... shall we try once more?

HUSBAND

Are you not too tired?

HANNAH

Give me your hand?

[She takes his hand and guides him alluringly]

HUSBAND

You are very soft ... and I stir.

[She kisses him passionately.]

HANNAH

I notice that ...

HUSBAND

My love, you have captivated my heart.

[She kisses him again]

HANNAH

... do you remember the poem you wrote for me when we courted?

HUSBAND

Yes ...The river flowest.

HANNAH

To a land of promise ...

HUSBAND

How far is the land of milk and honey?

HANNAH

Not so far as to be unreachable

HUSBAND

By a simple Journey. One step followed by another.

HANNAH

God shall look over us.

HUSBAND

And guide us to paradise. Where is the entrance?

HANNAH

Here my love ... let us try ...

[The husband extinguishes the lamp. There is the sound of the two other them moving.]

HUSBAND

Am I doing this right?

HANNAH

Yes ... Hus ...

[There is more movement. You can hear the breathing of the two of them getting heavier and more passionate.]

HUSBAND

I am almost in paradise and you ...

HANNAH

I am but a step behind you.

HUSBAND

Do catch up.

HANNAH

Can you slow ... I am almost with you.

HUSBAND

I shall try ... my love.

HANNAH

There we have arrived ...

HUSBAND

Together in Eden.

[The husband is now tired out, lays down and quickly falls asleep.]

[The Angel Gabriel appears at the head of their bed. He is unnoticed by all in the tent but Hannah who sees him.]

[She gets up but does not wrap herself in a skin but kneels before him.]

[She is about to speak when the angel puts his finger to his mouth to tell her to stay quiet. She smiles.]

[Gabriel smiles back and spreads his wings. He then brings his hands together and bows his head in prayer, blesses her and then fades out of view.]

[end of scene].

ACT THREE

Scene One

TENT EARLY EVENING

[Hannah is nine months pregnant and near birth].

[The two children and Hannah are in a tent. It is early evening]

[The two children are playing with Hannah. Penninah enters the tent carrying a heavy basket full of clothes that she has washed and dried.]

PENNINAH

Get away from her.

[The two children stop their playing but do not go away.]

PENNINAH

I said get away from her.

[The husband enters the tent.]

HUSBAND

Leave them be.

PENNINAH

I am their mother and will tell them what to do.

HUSBAND

I am their father ... and your husband ... and I say leave them be.
They are to keep Hannah company.

[She puts down the basket. She stands, straightens her hair.]

PENNINAH

And what happens when she goes into labour?

HUSBAND

Then she goes into labour ...

PENNINAH

I do not want my children around when it is time for her baby.

HUSBAND

And why not. They were about when our neighbours Sarah had hers,
and Rachel, and Maryam.

[Hannah tries to stand. Her husband motions her to stay.]

HANNAH

Perhaps she is fearful that mine will be a stillborn.

PENNINAH

And if it is?

HUSBAND

Penninah!

HANNAH

Fear not! I shall give birth to a healthy child.

PENNINAH

Really?

HANNAH

A boy

PENNINAH

A boy ...

HUSBAND

Yes

PENNINAH

You are so certain

HANNAH

I am ...

[As she tries to stand again her water breaks]

HANNAH

and so he comes ... my water has broken.

[Hannah sits back down.]

PENNINAH

Come children we are going ...

[Penninah reaches her hands for her children but then do not come to her.]

HUSBAND

Penninah you would leave Hannah when she needs you the most.

PENNINAH

She can manage.

HUSBAND

You did not manage by yourself when you gave birth to your two children. Hannah was there for you. Will you not be there for her?

[At their mention the two children gather by Hannah each putting a hand on her shoulder.]

HUSBAND

Hannah was there for you both times ... or have you forgotten?

PENNINAH

Come here children ... do as I command.

HUSBAND

Children ... stay where you are!

CHILDREN

Yes father.

HUSBAND

Children go fetch Sarah, Rachel and Maryam. Tell them that Hannah is having her baby.

CHILDREN

Yes father.

[Before they leave both give Hannah a kiss on her cheek and then dash from the tent.]

HUSBAND

Penninah once the other women are here you shall henceforth go to my brother's home.

PENNINAH

No I shall go to my parent's home.

HUSBAND

No you shall not go to your parent's home. You shall go to my brother's home and you shall stay there until I have summoned you back.

PENNINAH

I shall go where I please.

HUSBAND

You shall do as you are commanded. If you go to your parents then my children remain here and you can leave my tent forever!

PENNINAH

Surely you do not mean this!

HUSBAND

Take heed my second wife! I mean this more than anything else I have meant before.

[Hannah cries in pain. Penninah turns to glare at Hannah, but Hannah takes no notice of her.]

PENNINAH

Then ... I have no other choice but to do as you so command.

[Penninah leaves the tent with a flourish and without saying anything more. Hannah cries again.]

HANNAH

Husband ... do not be too harsh on Penninah.

HUSBAND

I shall be as harsh as need be.

[the two children return with three woman.]

HUSBAND

Sarah, Rachel and Maryam. My first wife is giving birth. Hannah helped bring your children into the world. Now it is time for you to repay her kindness ... in kind.

[The three women enter the tent and make busy]

[The children turn and are about to leave]

HUSBAND

Children ... come here.

[The two children run over to their father and stand next to him, one on each side. He takes both children by their hands.]

HUSBAND

Sarah, Rachel and Maryam as you are my witness ... my daughter shall remain here to help

[He sets her on her way. The Daughter goes to Hannah and holds her hand.
Then he turns to his son and kneels before him.]

HUSBAND

and you, my son, I command you to take your mother to my brother's
home and wait there until I summon your mother and you back.

[He hugs his son.]

SON

Yes father! I shall do as you command.

[The son goes over and kisses Hannah and is about to dash away when he
also kisses his sister.]

SON

Sis ... look after Hannah.

[The son leaves the tent.]

HANNAH

You are very wise my husband ...

[The Husband walks over to her and kneels and takes her into his arms.]

HUSBAND

All shall be well?

HANNAH

Yes ... all shall be well.

[He kisses Hannah in a poignant way.]

HANNAH

Don't worry husband. We shall see each other again soon.

[He kisses his daughter and then places a hand on her head.]

HUSBAND

Daughter be brave ... learn well the ways of the world.

[Hannah invites the Daughter to hug her.]

HANNAH

Come sit with me ...

[The daughter sits next to Hannah.]

HANNAH

We shall be brave together.

[The husband moves to the entrance of the tent impatiently guided out by one of the women.]

[The two other women move forward and make Hannah comfortable. She lies back. They pull her dress off her and now she is bare.]

[she cries in pain and leans forward.]

HUSBAND

What was once Paradise's entrance ...

HANNAH

... is now its exit.

[She pushes]

HANNAH

He comes. Be gone my love ... pray for me and our child.

[The husband takes one look back into the tent, blows Hannah a kiss.]

[She blows him a kiss in return.]

[He leaves.]

[end of scene]

Scene Two

[The husband waits outside the tent.]

[The flap of the tent opens and one of the women appears.]

HUSBAND

What news?

[The woman says nothing.]

HUSBAND

Will you not speak?

[She wipes her brow with the back of her arm.]

WOMAN

You men have it easy.

HUSBAND

It must be bad news then.

[The tent flap is opened by the woman and his daughter appears holding a child in swaddling clothes.]

[She holds the child carefully.]

DAUGHTER

Father you have a new son.

[He opens his arms and looks up to heaven.]

HUSBAND

Praise be to God.

[He looks down at his child.]

DAUGHTER

Is he not beautiful?

HUSBAND

Yes daughter he is beautiful.

DAUGHTER

Hannah told me to tell you that he is to be called Samuel.

HUSBAND

Samuel!

DAUGHTER

That is a wonderful name, father.

HUSBAND

So he shall be called Samuel.

[The daughter looks into the swaddling clothes and tickles the baby toes.]

DAUGHTER

Hello Samuel.

[He looks down at the child for a moment then asks]

HUSBAND

And of what of his mother, Hannah?

DAUGHTER

She is tired.

[He turns to the woman.]

WOMAN

By the grace of God and through her courage both Hannah and her child are fine.

HUSBAND

Our prayers have been answered.

HUSBAND

Take then the boy out of the cold and to the warmth of his mother.

DAUGHTER

But Hannah sleeps.

[The husband puts his hand on his daughter's head, kneels and looks earnestly into her eyes.]

HUSBAND

Daughter then it is you who must keep the child warm while his mother sleeps. Unwrap yourself. Take Samuel close to you and keep his warm.

[The daughter holds the baby close to herself.]

DAUGHTER

Yes father.

HUSBAND

Though you be too young to take him to your breasts, hold your brother close to you. Let him lay on you tummy. Do not fall asleep. Watch careful that he breathe and that you not smother him.

DAUGHTER

Yes father ... I shall do as you command.

[He stands]

HUSBAND

Good. You shall watch over little Samuel until Hannah wakes. I will come into the tent shortly.

[The woman opens the flap of the tent and the daughter enters. He turns to the woman.]

HUSBAND

Well?

WOMAN

It was a difficult birth ... at several stops along the way we feared losing both mother and child.

HUSBAND

Are you sure Hannah will be fine?

WOMAN

That which comes after the birth has passed and her bleeding has stopped. Her face has colour and his pulse is weak, yet regular. But ...

HUSBAND

But what?

WOMAN

I fear Hannah may never beget another child.

HUSBAND

For both Hannah and I, one child ... Samuel... is enough.

WOMAN

And ... well ...

HUSBAND

Is there more to tell me?

WOMAN

Yes ... there is more.

HUSBAND

More you say? Get on with it.

WOMAN

Your son arrived at the break of dawn. And as we lifted him up to heaven his first cry was at that very instance met by a ray of bright morning light that entered past the flap in the tent. It was God blessing him.

HUSBAND

Yes ... he is a blessing for Hannah, for me, for his siblings

WOMAN

Not for Penninah?

HUSBAND

That is yet to be imagined.

WOMAN

Miracles do happen.

HUSBAND

Yes ... but miracles only happen to the deserving.

WOMAN

Shall I fetch Penninah?

HUSBAND

No ... not yet.

WOMAN

Shall I send her the good news?

HUSBAND

If my second wife might view it as such.

WOMAN

She might think the news bad?

HUSBAND

Yes she might. No, she can wait.

WOMAN

Oh, I see. Then wait she shall.

HUSBAND

As for me I shall wait outside my tent until Hannah wakes and is ready to see me. I have asked my daughter to keep little Samuel warm and you shall look after them all, will you.

WOMAN

Yes. That is best. Hannah is so right.

[The woman stands and looks at him. He motions her to enter the tent.]

WOMAN

Hannah is so right.

HUSBAND

So right about what?

WOMAN

That you are wise man and a deserving father. Were my husband so
...

[The woman turns and enters the tent.

WOMAN

God has answered your prayers.

HUSBAND

With a little help.

WOMAN

You should know something ...

HUSBAND

What?

WOMAN

Your daughter was very brave and very helpful. Both she and first
son are blessings too.

HUSBAND

Oh ... I know that already.

[She lets the flap of the tent drop.]

HUSBAND

Thank you Lord for blessing us both with a miracle.

[end of scene]

Scene Three

Encampment Day

[Husband is waiting for his brother, Penninah and his Son. He is pacing back and forth in an agitated state.]

HUSBAND

Where are they? They should have been here hours ago?

[He sees his son at a distance.]

HUSBAND

What is this?

HUSBAND

Perhaps my son has run ahead because he is eager to meet his new brother.

[His daughter opens the flap of the tent but does not step out.]

DAUGHTER

Can you see them father?

HUSBAND

Only your older brother.

[The daughter looks out in the distance and see her older brother. She then looks at her father.]

DAUGHTER

That is odd. Mother never lets him walk by himself when we travel.

[He turns to her and she realizes the awkwardness of what she has just said.]

DAUGHTER

Father, do not worry. Come into the tent and come play with little Samuel.

HUSBAND

I will come and play with you both in a few minutes.

[She closes the flap of the tent. You can hear joyful sounds from within the tent.]

HUSBAND

Perhaps my first son has run ahead to tell me that his mother and my brother are some distance behind him.

[He paces back and forth]

HUSBAND

By my daughter is right. Penninah would never let him walk by himself when we travel.

[Hannah appears at the flap of the tent, but does not step out from within.
She looks tired]

HUSBAND

How are you my love?

HANNAH

I am tired ... but apart from that I am fine.

HUSBAND

You look beautiful my love.

HANNAH

You would say that to me even if I were at death's door.

HUSBAND

Hannah ... you are very beautiful.

HANNAH

Thank you my love.

HUSBAND

It is good that you are up and walking. And our son?

HANNAH

Samuel is fine. He has an appetite!

HUSBAND

I am happy to hear that.

HANNAH

Your daughter and I will shortly give Samuel his bath. Will you not come and help?

HUSBAND

No ... I leave you two to look after Samuel.

HANNAH

Is everything fine with you my husband? You cannot take your eyes off the road.

HUSBAND

As fine as it can be my love. Do not worry. Everything will turn out fine.

HANNAH

So everything is not fine.

HUSBAND

You and Samuel are both healthy and doing well. That is all that matters at the moment?

HANNAH

And what of the rest of our family?

HUSBAND

You need not worry about the rest of our family. That is for me to worry.

HANNAH

Am I not your first wife?

HUSBAND

Am I not your husband?

[Hannah looks out in the distance and see his first son.]

HANNAH

Yes ... I see your first son approaching.

HUSBAND

Yes my first son comes.

HANNAH

But where is ...

[he cuts her off.]

HUSBAND

Where indeed!

HANNAH

It has been four days since Samuel's birth.

HUSBAND

I know, I know.

HANNAH

We circumcise him four days hence.

[He waves his arms.]

HUSBAND

Go back into the tent and rest. Fret not. Look after your son and yourself. Leave everything else to me. I will talk to my first son alone.

HANNAH

Yes my husband,

[Hannah lets the flap of the tent drop. The first son is now at the camp.]

SON

Hello Father.

HUSBAND

Hello my son. Where is your mother?

[He looks past his son up the road.]

SON

Gone.

HUSBAND

Gone where?

SON

I do not know father.

HUSBAND

You do not know! I find that hard to believe. I ask you again, where is your mother.

SON

Honestly father, I do not know.

HUSBAND

How can this be?

SON

When I awoke this morning she and her things were gone.

HUSBAND

How come you travel the roads by yourself? Where is my brother?

SON

Uncle is out looking for her. Uncle sent me home and gave me this to give you.

[The son hands his father a small parchment. He takes the parchment and notices the seal is broken.

HUSBAND

The seal is broken!

SON

Yes father.

HUSBAND

Then you have read this!

SON

Yes.

HUSBAND

Why ... by what right?

SON

Because she is my mother!

HUSBAND

She might be your mother ... but Penninah is my wife.

[he reads the parchment and then looks up and glares at his son.]

SON

Uncle thinks that she has gone back to visit grandfather and grandmother.

HUSBAND

That is not what he says.

[The son begins to cry.]

SON

Uncle says she has gone to visit her parents.

HUSBAND

No ... he does not say that she has gone to visit ... he says he believes that Penninah has gone back to her parents.

SON

You see father we do not know where she has gone. Neither does Uncle.

HUSBAND

So you do speak the truth.

SON

You have taught me father that the truth is most important in life.

HUSBAND

So it is! But it is Moses who taught us all this.

[The son says nothing. The husband reads the parchment again.]

HUSBAND

Penninah ... my second wife ... your mother ... has told my brother she will not be coming back here. Where else can she go except back to her parents?

SON

Will we ever see her again?

HUSBAND

I don't know. We circumcise Samuel in four days. If Penninah is not here then ...

[The husband stops and turns his back on his son. The boy stares for a moment at his father without saying anything then he starts for the tent.]

[The husband stops him before he enters the tent.]

HUSBAND

Go to the river and wash yourself and change into new clothes. Then come back to see me before you enter the tent. We have a new born amongst us and we have to be clean to keep him safe.

SON

But father it has been a long journey and I am hungry and thirsty.

HUSBAND

You now have a younger brother named Samuel. You must look out for your younger brother as dearly as you look out for your sister.

SON

Yes father. I love my sister dearly. I have yet to meet Samuel ... he is my brother and as dear to me as my sister.

HUSBAND

I am happy to hear this. Go to the river. I shall get you food and drink.

SON

What about my mother Penninah?

HUSBAND

It is best that I am the one to tell my first wife and my daughter what has happened.

[the son walks slowly towards the river]

[After the son is gone, the flap opens and the daughter looks out. She is carrying Samuel.]

DAUGHTER

I heard voices ...

HUSBAND

It is your older brother.

DAUGHTER

And where is our mother?

HUSBAND

Be patient my daughter. Your older brother and I will enter the tent when he comes back from washing himself in the river.

[She makes a move to step out of the tent to look for her brother.]

HUSBAND

Stay in the tent with Hannah and your brother Samuel.

DAUGHTER

I want to show him the new born.

HUSBAND

Hannah should be the one to introduce Samuel to his older brother. Go give Samuel back to his mother.

DAUGHTER

I want to say hello to my brother.

HUSBAND

After you have given Samuel back to his mother, gather up food and drink for your older brother and bring it here and set it down at the my feet.

DAUGHTER

But father ... I want to hear news of my mother.

HUSBAND

We shall both be along to speak of this shortly. Be a good girl now.

DAUGHTER

Yes father.

[She sounds dejected but does what she is told. She lets the flap drop.]

[In a moment she returns with food and drink which she places at her father's feet. Then she re-enters the tent.]

[The first son reappears breathless because he has been running. All he wears is a loin cloth.]

FIRST SON

Was that my sister with little Samuel.

HUSBAND

Yes it was. Where is your son.

FIRST SON

I left my dusty and dirty robe washing in the river. My new robe is with my other things in the tent.

[he motions to the food and drink]

HUSBAND

Oh I see. You said you were hungry and thirsty. Your sister has brought this for you from inside our tent. Eat then.

[He takes a piece of bread and some drink and eats while they talk.]

FIRST SON

And what will happen to my mother?

HUSBAND

What of Penninah you mean?

FIRST SON

Yes Penninah.

[He says Penninah in an anguished tone.]

HUSBAND

It was wrong that she was not here for the birth of Samuel. It is doubly wrong that she has not returned as I have commanded.

SON

Can you not go to talk with her?

HUSBAND

It is a three days journey there and three more back. I will not leave Hannah and my new born son Samuel to go to plead with Penninah.

SON

If you do not go to her she will think herself forgotten.

HUSBAND

Be careful son and remember who you speak with.

SON

I am sorry father. I am just so worried.

HUSBAND

What do you have to worry about?

SON

That you will no longer love me and my sister.

HUSBAND

Did Penninah say that! Oh silly boy. You are but a toy in someone else's game!

SON

A toy?

HUSBAND

Pawns in her game of chess.

SON

Father?

HUSBAND

I love both of you as dearly as I love little Samuel.

[the boy starts to cry.]

SON

How could I be so foolish father?

HUSBAND

You are not the fool. Your Penninah is. She plays a game ... a game that I do not wish to play.

SON

I am so sorry to worry you father.

HUSBAND

You and your sister are no worry to me.

SON

What will happen now?

HUSBAND

If Penninah is not here when we circumcise Samuel four days hence, I am at a loss to know what can be done. She will have done more than just disrespected me, her husband.

[He is about to say something when the son decides to say nothing.

HUSBAND

If she is not here when we circumcise Samuel she will have disrespected God, and that cannot be forgiven.

SON

Shall I go then to get her?

HUSBAND

If you leave she may never let you come back to us. It is best that you stay.

SON

I understand.

HUSBAND

Let me speak to your sister and Hannah. If they ask you any questions let me answer. Do you understand?

FIRST SON

Yes father.

HUSBAND

Then let us go in the tent and Hannah will introduce you to your new brother.

[The Husband puts his hand on his son's shoulder and the two enter the tent]

[end of scene]

ACT FOUR

Scene One

Encampment Circumcision Day

[There is crying from within the tent]

[The flap opens and out comes the Husband, the Son and the Daughter.]

HUSBAND

There ... Samuel is circumcised. He is now one of us.

DAUGHTER

Father. Why must boys be circumcised?

HUSBAND

God asks this of us.

SON

Why are girls not circumcised then father. Does God not ask this too?

DAUGHTER

What might God want to take from me? There is nothing there to take!

SON

I don't know. There is nothing to take is there?

DAUGHTER

There is nothing I might want to give up, if that is what you are really asking.

SON

How can I ask ... when all this is still a mystery to me.

[He tugs at her robe and she slaps his hand away.]

DAUGHTER

As it should be ...

HUSBAND

Stop teasing your sister.

SON

Why was my sister allowed to stay and help Hannah give birth to Samuel and not I? I am the eldest.

HUSBAND

Giving life to a baby is a woman's role ... this God has decided.

DAUGHTER

You are a boy!

SON

Need you remind me this constantly as if this were a curse or a burden!

HUSBAND

Stop this quarreling my children! It is not ours to ask such questions ... leave such questions to the synagogue and the wise men. Come into the tent and out of the mid-day sun.

[The husband enters the tent.]

DAUGHTER

Brother I just tease you.

SON

Is it true?

DAUGHTER

Is what true?

SON

That you were watched as Samuel was born.

DAUGHTER

Yes. It was remarkable. His entrance into the world was slow. Sarah described it as the shortest but most important journey that we all will ever take.

SON

And?

DAUGHTER

And what?

SON

Tell me more!

[she giggles.]

DAUGHTER

No ... it's best you ask Hannah such questions.

SON

And not father?

DAUGHTER

The birth of a child is for doctors, midwives and woman only.

SON

But you are but a girl, not a woman.

DAUGHTER

A girl ... not anymore.

SON

Says who?

DAUGHTER

Says Hannah.

SON

You are not a woman ... you have no breasts.

DAUGHTER

You know ... I am still young ... but they will come.

SON

So how can it be you are a woman?

DAUGHTER

Hannah let me cut the cord.

SON

The cord?

DAUGHTER

That what joined baby to mother when Samuel was inside Hannah?

SON

Surely you gest!

DAUGHTER

No I don't. And I was the first to hold Samuel when the midwife gave him to be held. Hannah let me hold him first.

SON

So?

DAUGHTER

And father ask me to keep Samuel warm in the hours after his birth.

[They both go quiet.]

SON

I am sad that mother Penninah was not here to help Hannah.

DAUGHTER

Yes she is not here. Sarah told me that when we were both born
Hannah helped in so many ways. She was the one who cut our cords
and held us first.

SON

Hannah is a wonderful person!

DAUGHTER

So where is our mother Penninah?

SON

Father says that our mother has gone back to her parents.

DAUGHTER

What will happen?

SON

I do not know. I wonder if we will ever see our mother again?

DAUGHTER

Father said for us not to worry. He says we have Hannah.

SON

Hannah is not our mother.

DAUGHTER

Hannah was there when we were both born. Hannah took us to her own breasts and fed us and helped us grow.

SON

So did Sarah, Rachel and Maryam I am told.

DAUGHTER

Who told you this?

SON

Penninah.

DAUGHTER

Of this she did not tell the truth, for Sarah, Rachel and Maryam told me so.

SON

Than Hannah is our mother too.

DAUGHTER

Yes, she is. And if I were old enough I would take Samuel to my breasts and feed him.

[the son gets angry]

SON

But Samuel is your brother.

DAUGHTER

It is a woman's role. He is a baby ... who happens to be my brother.

SON

I can't understand you woman

[The son storms away.]

DAUGHTER

If you keep this up, you never will.

[The daughter enters the tent.

[end of scene]

Scene Two

Synagogue Day

[Hannah enters carrying Samuel. The synagogue is empty.]

[She kneels and sets Samuel on the ground before her and un-wraps him in his swaddling clothes.]

[Hannah opens her arms and looks up to heaven and prays]

HANNAH

“My heart rejoices in the LORD;
in the LORD my horn is lifted high.
My mouth boasts over my enemies,
for I delight in your deliverance.

There is no one holy like the LORD;
there is no one besides you;
there is no Rock like our God.

[She starts to weep]

HANNAH

Do not keep talking so proudly
or let your mouth speak such arrogance,
for the LORD is a God who knows,
and by him deeds are weighed.

The bows of the warriors are broken,
but those who stumbled are armed with strength.

Those who were full hire themselves out for food,
but those who were hungry are hungry no more.
She who was barren has borne seven children,
but she who has had many sons pines away.

[She gathers her robe close around her and bows to the ground.]

HANNAH

The LORD brings death and makes alive;
he brings down to the grave and raises up.
The LORD sends poverty and wealth;
he humbles and he exalts.

He raises the poor from the dust
and lifts the needy from the ash heap;
he seats them with princes

and has them inherit a throne of honor.

“For the foundations of the earth are the LORD’s;
on them he has set the world.

[Hannah sits up, pauses and then wraps her son in his swaddling clothes.
She picks him up and holds her close to herself. She stands.]

HANNAH

He will guard the feet of his faithful servants,
but the wicked will be silenced in the place of darkness.
It is not by strength that one prevails;
those who oppose the LORD will be broken.

[She opens her robe and presses Samuel to her breast.]

[A light comes down from heaven and the angel Gabriel appears in the
background.]

[She does not see the angel because he is behind her high up and looking
down.]

HANNAH

The Most High will thunder from heaven;

the LORD will judge the ends of the earth.

“He will give strength to his king
and exalt the horn of his anointed.”

[A wind starts to blow from with the synagogue. It is Gabriel flapping his wings.]

[Hannah’s hair flows in the wind and a halo appears around her head and that of her son Samuel.]

[A feather floats down in front of her and she turns around and sees the angel Gabriel. He stops flapping his wings.]

HANNAH

You were with me at my mother’s grave.

[Gabriel nods.]

HANNAH

You visited me after Samuel was conceived.

[Gabriel nods.]

HANNAH

You are here with us today.

[Hannah looks down at her son. Gabriel smiles back and spreads his wings.]

[See looks up at him.]

HANNAH

Will you not speak to me?

GABRIEL

I have always been with you ... as I shall always be with you. Your son Samuel will grow to be a wise and important man.

[Hannah lifts Samuel and kisses him on his forehead.]

GABRIEL

And you shall live to see your great grandchildren ...

[Hannah hugs Samuel.]

[Gabriel then brings his hands together and bows his head in prayer and blesses her.]

GABRIEL

Go with God.

[The angel Gabriel fades out of view.]

[Hannah begins to cry as she walks out of the synagogue holding little Samuel close to her.]

[Fade out]

[end of scene].

The End.

Canadiana

Is Prohibition Coming to England? by Stephen Leacock

In the United States and Canada the principal topic of polite conversation is now prohibition. At every dinner party the serving of the cocktails immediately introduces the subject: the rest of the dinner is enlivened throughout with the discussion of rum-runners, bootleggers, storage of liquor and the State constitution of New Jersey. Under this influence all social and conversational values are shifted and rearranged. A "scholarly" man no longer means a man who can talk well on literary subjects but a man who understands the eighteenth amendment and can explain the legal difference between implementing statutes such as the Volstead Act and the underlying state legislation. A "scientist" (invaluable in these conversations) is a man who can make clear the distinction between alcoholic percentages by bulk and by weight. And a "brilliant engineer" means a man who explains how to make homebrewed beer with a kick in it. Similarly, a "raconteur" means a man who has a fund of amusing stories about "bootleggers" and an "interesting traveller" means a man who has been to Havana and can explain how wet it is. Indeed, the whole conception of travel and of interest in foreign countries is now altered: as soon as any one mentions that he has been in a foreign country, all the company ask in one breath, "Is it dry?" The question "How is Samoa?" or "How is Turkey?" or "How is British Columbia?" no longer refers to the climate or natural resources: it means "Is the place dry?" When such a question is asked and the answer is "It's wet," there is a deep groan all around the table.

I understand that when the recent disarmament conference met at Washington just as the members were going to sit down at the table Monsieur Briand said to President Harding, "How dry is the United States, anyway?" And the whole assembly talked about it for half an hour. That was why the first newspaper bulletins merely said, "Conference exchanges credentials."

As a discoverer of England I therefore made it one of my chief cares to try to obtain accurate information of this topic. I was well aware that immediately on my return to Canada the first question I would be asked would be "Is England going dry?" I realised that in any report I might make to the National Geographical Society or to the Political Science Association, the members of these bodies, being scholars, would want accurate information about the price of whiskey, the percentage of alcohol, and the hours of opening and closing the saloons.

My first impression on the subject was, I must say, one of severe moral shock. Landing in England after spending the summer in Ontario, it seemed a terrible thing to see people openly drinking on an English train. On an Ontario train, as everybody knows, there is no way of taking a drink except by climbing up on the roof, lying flat on one's stomach, and taking a suck out of a flask. But in England in any dining car one actually sees a waiter approach a person dining and say, "Beer, sir, or wine?" This is done in broad daylight with no apparent sense of criminality or moral shame. Appalling though it sounds, bottled ale is openly sold on the trains at twenty-five cents a bottle and dry sherry at eighteen cents a glass.

When I first saw this I expected to see the waiter arrested on the spot. I looked around to see if there were any "spotters," detectives, or secret service men on the train. I anticipated that the train conductor would appear and throw the waiter off the car. But then I realised that I was in England and that in the British Isles they still tolerate the consumption of alcohol. Indeed, I doubt if they are even aware that they are "consuming alcohol." Their impression is that they are drinking beer.

At the beginning of my discussion I will therefore preface a few exact facts and statistics for the use of geographical societies, learned bodies and government commissions. The quantity of beer consumed in England in a given period is about 200,000,000 gallons. The life of a bottle of Scotch whiskey is seven seconds. The number of public houses, or "pubs," in the English countryside is one to every half mile. The percentage of the working classes drinking beer is 125: the percentage of the class without work drinking beer is 200.

Statistics like these do not, however, give a final answer to the question, "Is prohibition coming to England?" They merely show that it is not there now. The question itself will be answered in as many different ways as there are different kinds of people. Any prohibitionist will tell you that the coming of prohibition to England is as certain as the coming eclipse of the sun. But this is always so. It is in human nature that people are impressed by the cause they work in. I once knew a minister of the Scotch Church who took a voyage round the world: he said that the thing that impressed him most was

the growth of presbyterianism in Japan. No doubt it did. When the Orillia lacrosse team took their trip to Australia, they said on their return that lacrosse was spreading all over the world. In the same way there is said to be a spread all over the world of Christian Science, proportional representation, militarism, peace sentiment, barbarism, altruism, psychoanalysis and death from wood alcohol. They are what are called world movements.

My own judgment in regard to prohibition in the British Isles is this: In Scotland, prohibition is not coming: if anything, it is going. In Ireland, prohibition will only be introduced when they have run out of other forms of trouble. But in England I think that prohibition could easily come unless the English people realise where they are drifting and turn back. They are in the early stage of the movement already.

Turning first to Scotland, there is no fear, I say, that prohibition will be adopted there: and this from the simple reason that the Scotch do not drink. I have elsewhere alluded to the extraordinary misapprehension that exists in regard to the Scotch people and their sense of humour. I find a similar popular error in regard to the use of whiskey by the Scotch. Because they manufacture the best whiskey in the world, the Scotch, in popular fancy, are often thought to be addicted to the drinking of it. This is purely a delusion. During the whole of two or three pleasant weeks spent in lecturing in Scotland, I never on any occasion saw whiskey made use of as a beverage. I have seen people take it, of course, as a medicine, or as a precaution, or as a wise offset against a rather treacherous climate; but as a beverage, never.

The manner and circumstance of their offering whiskey to a stranger amply illustrates their point of view towards it. Thus at my first lecture in Glasgow where I was to appear before a large and fashionable audience, the chairman said to me in the committee room that he was afraid that there might be a draft on the platform. Here was a serious matter. For a lecturer who has to earn his living by his occupation, a draft on the platform is not a thing to be disregarded. It might kill him. Nor is it altogether safe for the chairman himself, a man already in middle life, to be exposed to a current of cold air. In this case, therefore, the chairman suggested that he thought it might be "prudent"—that was his word, "prudent"—if I should take a small drop of whiskey before encountering the draft. In return I told him that I could not think of his accompanying me to the platform unless he would let me insist on his taking a very reasonable precaution. Whiskey taken on these terms not only seems like a duty but it tastes better.

In the same way I find that in Scotland it is very often necessary to take something to drink on purely meteorological grounds. The weather simply cannot be trusted. A man might find that on "going out into the weather" he is overwhelmed by a heavy fog or an avalanche of snow or a driving storm of rain. In such a case a mere drop of whiskey might save his life. It would be folly not to take it. Again,—"coming in out of the weather" is a thing not to be trifled with. A person coming in unprepared and unprotected might be seized with angina pectoris or appendicitis and die upon the spot. No reasonable person would refuse the simple precaution of taking a small drop immediately after his entry.

I find that, classified altogether, there are seventeen reasons advanced in Scotland for taking whiskey. They run as follows: Reason one, because it is raining; Two, because it is not raining; Three, because you are just going out into the weather; Four, because you have just come in from the weather; Five; no, I forget the ones that come after that. But I remember that reason number seventeen is "because it canna do ye any harm." On the whole, reason seventeen is the best.

Put in other words this means that the Scotch make use of whiskey with dignity and without shame: and they never call it alcohol.

In England the case is different. Already the English are showing the first signs that indicate the possible approach of prohibition. Already all over England there are weird regulations about the closing hours of the public houses. They open and close according to the varying regulations of the municipality. In some places they open at six in the morning, close down for an hour from nine till ten, open then till noon, shut for ten minutes, and so on; in some places they are open in the morning and closed in the evening; in other places they are open in the evening and closed in the morning. The ancient idea was that a wayside public house was a place of sustenance and comfort, a human need that might be wanted any hour. It was in the same class with the life boat or the emergency ambulance. Under the old common law the innkeeper must supply meat and drink at any hour. If he was asleep the traveller might wake him. And in those days meat and drink were regarded in the same light. Note how great the change is. In modern life in England there is nothing that you dare wake up a man for except gasoline.

The mere fact that you need a drink is no longer held to entitle you to break his rest.

In London especially one feels the full force of the "closing" regulations. The bars open and shut at intervals like daisies blinking at the sun. And like the flowers at evening they close their petals with the darkness. In London they have already adopted the deadly phrases of the prohibitionist, such as "alcohol" and "liquor traffic" and so on: and already the "sale of spirits" stops absolutely at about eleven o'clock at night.

This means that after theatre hours London is a "city of dreadful night." The people from the theatre scuttle to their homes. The lights are extinguished in the windows. The streets darken. Only a belated taxi still moves. At midnight the place is deserted. At 1 A.M., the lingering footfalls echo in the empty street. Here and there a restaurant in a fashionable street makes a poor pretence of keeping open for after theatre suppers. Odd people, the shivering wrecks of theatre parties, are huddled here and there. A gloomy waiter lays a sardine on the table. The guests charge their glasses with Perrier Water, Lithia Water, Citrate of Magnesia, or Bromo Seltzer. They eat the sardine and vanish into the night. Not even Oshkosh, Wisconsin, or Middlebury, Vermont, is quieter than is the night life of London. It may no doubt seem a wise thing to go to bed early.

But it is a terrible thing to go to bed early by Act of Parliament.

All of which means that the people of England are not facing the prohibition question fairly and squarely. If they see no harm in "consuming alcohol" they ought to say so and let their code of regulations reflect the fact. But the "closing" and "regulating" and "squeezing" of the "liquor traffic", without any outspoken protest, means letting the whole case go by default. Under these circumstances an organised and active minority can always win and impose its will upon the crowd.

When I was in England I amused myself one day by writing an imaginary picture of what England will be like when the last stage is reached and London goes the way of New York and Chicago. I cast it in the form of a letter from an American prohibitionist in which he describes the final triumph of prohibition in England. With the permission of the reader I reproduce it here:

THE ADVENT OF PROHIBITION IN ENGLAND

As written in the correspondence of an American visitor

How glad I am that I have lived to see this wonderful reform of prohibition at last accomplished in England. There is something so difficult about the British, so stolid, so hard to move.

We tried everything in the great campaign that we made, and for ever so long it didn't seem to work. We had processions,

just as we did at home in America, with great banners carried round bearing the inscription: "Do you want to save the boy?" But these people looked on and said, "Boy? Boy? What boy?" Our workers were almost disheartened. "Oh, sir," said one of them, an ex-barkeeper from Oklahoma, "it does seem so hard that we have total prohibition in the States and here they can get all the drink they want." And the good fellow broke down and sobbed.

But at last it has come. After the most terrific efforts we managed to get this nation stampeded, and for more than a month now England has been dry. I wish you could have witnessed the scenes, just like what we saw at home in America, when it was known that the bill had passed. The members of the House of Lords all stood up on their seats and yelled, "Rah! Rah! Rah! Who's bone dry? We are!" And the brewers and innkeepers were emptying their barrels of beer into the Thames just as at St. Louis they emptied the beer into the Mississippi.

I can't tell you with what pleasure I watched a group of members of the Athenaeum Club sitting on the bank of the Thames and opening bottles of champagne and pouring them into the river. "To think," said one of them to me, "that there was a time when I used to lap up a couple of quarts of this terrible stuff every evening." I got him to give me a

few bottles as a souvenir, and I got some more souvenirs, whiskey and liqueurs, when the members of the Beefsteak Club were emptying out their cellars into Green Street; so when you come over, I shall still be able, of course, to give you a drink.

We have, as I said, been bone dry only a month, and yet already we are getting the same splendid results as in America. All the big dinners are now as refined and as elevating and the dinner speeches as long and as informal as they are in New York or Toronto. The other night at a dinner at the White Friars Club I heard Sir Owen Seaman speaking, not in that light futile way that he used to have, but quite differently. He talked for over an hour and a half on the State ownership of the Chinese Railway System, and I almost fancied myself back in Boston.

And the working class too. It is just wonderful how prohibition has increased their efficiency. In the old days they used to drop their work the moment the hour struck. Now they simply refuse to do so. I noticed yesterday a foreman in charge of a building operation vainly trying to call the bricklayers down. "Come, come, gentlemen," he shouted, "I must insist on your stopping for the night." But they just went on laying bricks faster than ever.

Of course, as yet there are a few slight difficulties and deficiencies, just as there are with us in America. We have had the same trouble with wood-alcohol (they call it methylated spirit here), with the same deplorable results. On some days the list of deaths is very serious, and in some cases we are losing men we can hardly spare. A great many of our leading actors—in fact, most of them—are dead. And there has been a heavy loss, too, among the literary class and in the legal profession.

There was a very painful scene last week at the dinner of the Benchers of Gray's Inn. It seems that one of the chief justices had undertaken to make home brew for the Benchers, just as the people do on our side of the water. He got one of the waiters to fetch him some hops and three raw potatoes, a packet of yeast and some boiling water. In the end, four of the Benchers were carried out dead. But they are going to give them a public funeral in the Abbey.

I regret to say that the death list in the Royal Navy is very heavy. Some of the best sailors are gone, and it is very difficult to keep admirals. But I have tried to explain to the people here that these are merely the things that one must expect, and that, with a little patience, they will have bone-dry admirals and bone-dry statesmen just as good

as the wet ones. Even the clergy can be dried up with firmness and perseverance.

There was also a slight sensation here when the Chancellor of the Exchequer brought in his first appropriation for maintaining prohibition. From our point of view in America, it was modest enough. But these people are not used to it. The Chancellor merely asked for ten million pounds a month to begin on; he explained that his task was heavy; he has to police, not only the entire coast, but also the interior; for the Grampian Hills of Scotland alone he asked a million. There was a good deal of questioning in the House over these figures. The Chancellor was asked if he intended to keep a hired spy at every street corner in London. He answered, "No, only on every other street." He added also that every spy must wear a brass collar with his number.

I must admit further, and I am sorry to have to tell you this, that now we have prohibition it is becoming increasingly difficult to get a drink. In fact, sometimes, especially in the very early morning, it is most inconvenient and almost impossible. The public houses being closed, it is necessary to go into a drug store—just as it is with us—and lean up against the counter and make a gurgling sound like apoplexy. One often sees these apoplexy cases lined up four deep.

But the people are finding substitutes, just as they do with us. There is a tremendous run on patent medicines, perfume, glue and nitric acid. It has been found that Shears' soap contains alcohol, and one sees people everywhere eating cakes of it. The upper classes have taken to chewing tobacco very considerably, and the use of opium in the House of Lords has very greatly increased.

But I don't want you to think that if you come over here to see me, your private life will be in any way impaired or curtailed. I am glad to say that I have plenty of rich connections whose cellars are very amply stocked. The Duke of Blank is said to have 5,000 cases of Scotch whiskey, and I have managed to get a card of introduction to his butler. In fact you will find that, just as with us in America, the benefit of prohibition is intended to fall on the poorer classes. There is no desire to interfere with the rich.

Seven Poems by Isabella Yalancy Crawford (1846-1887)

Songs for the Soldiers

If songs be sung let minstrels strike their harps
To large and joyous strains, all thunder-winged
To beat along vast shores. Ay, let their notes
Wild into eagles soaring toward the sun,
And voiced like bugles bursting through the dawn
When armies leap to life! Give them such breasts
As hold immortal fires, and they shall fly,
Swept with our little sphere through all the change
That waits a whirling world.

Joy's an immortal;
She hath a fiery fibre in her flesh
That will not droop or die; so let her chant
The paeans of the dead, w^here holy Grief
Hath, trembling, thrust the feeble mist aside
That veils her dead, and in the wondrous clasp
Of re-possession ceases to be Grief.

Joy's ample voice shall still roll over all,
And chronicle the heroes to young hearts
Who knew them not
There's glory on the sword
That keeps its scabbard-sleep, unless the foe
Beat at the wall, then freely leaps to light

And thrusts to keep the sacred towers of Home
And the dear lines that map the nation out upon the world.

His Mother

In the first dawn she lifted from her bed
The holy silver of her noble head.
And listened, listened, listened for his tread.
'Too soon, too soon!' she murmured, 'Yet I'll keep
My vigil longer—thou, O tender Sleep,
Art but the joy of those who wake and weep!
'Joy's self hath keen, wide eyes. O flesh of mine.
And mine own blood and bone, the very wine
Of my aged heart, I see thy dear eyes shine!
'I hear thy tread ; thy light, loved footsteps run
Along the way, eager for that 'Well done!'
We'll weep and kiss to thee, my soldier son!
'Blest mother I—he lives ! Yet had he died
Blest were I still,—I sent him on the tide
Of my full heart to save his nation's pride!
'O God, if that I tremble so to-day.
Bowed with such blessings that I cannot pray
By speech—a mother prays, dear Lord, alway
'In some far fibre of her trembling mind!
I'll up—I thought I heard a bugle bind
Its silver with the silver of the wind.'

His Wife and Baby

In the lone place of the leaves,
Where they touch the hanging eaves,
There sprang a spray of joyous song that sounded sweet and sturdy;
And the baby in the bed
Raised the shining of his head.
And pulled the mother's lids apart to wake and watch the birdie.

She kissed lip-dimples sweet,
The red soles of his feet,
The waving palms that patted hers as wind-blown blossoms wander;
He twined her tresses silk
Round his neck as white as milk —
'Now, baby, say what birdie sings upon his green spray yonder.'

'He sings a plenty things —
Just watch him wash his wings I
He says Papa will march to-day with drums home through the city.
Here, birdie, here's my cup.
You drink the milk all up;
I'll kiss you, birdie, now you're washed like baby clean and pretty.'

She rose; she sought the skies
With the twin joys of her eyes;

She sent the strong dove of her soul up through the dawning's glory
She kissed upon her hand
The glowing golden band
That bound the fine scroll of her life and clasped her simple story.

His Sweetheart

Sylvia's lattices were dark—
Roses made them narrow.
In the dawn there came a Spark,
Armed with an arrow:
Blithe he burst by dewy spray,
Winged by bud and blossom.
All undaunted urged his way
Straight to Sylvia's bosom.
'Sylvia !' Sylvia ! Sylvia!' he
Like a bee kept humming,
'Wake, my sweeting; waken thee,
For thy Soldier's coming!'
Sylvia sleeping in the dawn,
Dreams that Cupid's trill is
Roses singing, on the lawn,
Courting crested lilies.
Sylvia smiles and Sylvia sleeps,
Sylvia weeps and slumbers;
Cupid to her pink ear creeps,

Pipes his pretty numbers.
Sylvia dreams that bugles play,
Hears a martial drumming;
Sylvia springs to meet the day
With her Soldier coming.
Happy Sylvia, on thee wait
All the gracious graces!
Venus mild her cestus plait
Round thy lawns and laces !
Flora fling a flower most fair,
Hope a rainbow lend thee!
All the nymphs to Cupid dear
On this day befriend thee!
'Sylvia! Sylvia! Sylvia!' hear
How he keeps a-humming,
Laughing in her jewelled ear,
'Sweet, thy Soldier's coming!'

From 'The Helot'

Who may quench the god-born fire
Pulsing at the soul's deep root?
Tyrant, grind it in the mire,
Lo, it vivifies the brute!
Stings the chain-embruted clay.
Senseless to his yoke-bound shame;

Goads him on to rend and slay.
Knowing not the spurring flame!
Tyrant, changeless stand the gods.
Nor their calm might yielded thee;
Not beneath thy chains and rods
Dies man's god-gift, Liberty!
Bruteward lash thy Helots, hold
Brain and soul and clay in gyves.
Coin their blood and sweat in gold,
Build thy cities on their lives,—
Comes a day the spark divine
Answers to the gods who gave;
Fierce the hot flames pant and shine
In the bruised breast of the slave.
Changeless stand the gods !—nor he
Knows he answers their behest,
Feels the might of their decree
In the blind rage of his breast.
Tyrant, tremble when ye tread
Down the servile Helot clods
Under despot heel is bred
The white ang'er of the gods.
Through the shackle-cankered dust,
Through the gyved soul, foul and dark,
Force they, changeless gods and just,
Up the bright, eternal spark,

Till, like lightnings vast and fierce.
On the land its terror smites;
Till its flames the tyrant pierce.
Till the dust the despot bites.

The Mother's Soul

When the moon was horned the mother died,
And the child pulled at her hand and knee,
And he rubbed her cheek and loudly cried :
*O mother, arise, give bread to me !'
But the pine tree bent its head.
And the wind at the door-post said:
*O child, thy mother is dead!'
The sun set his loom to weave the day;
The frost bit sharp like a silent cur;
The child by her pillow paused in his play:
"Mother, build up the sweet fire of fir!"
But the fir tree shook its cones,
And loud cried the pitiful stones:
'Wolf Death has thy mother's bones!'
They bore the mother out on her bier;
Their tears made warm her breast and shroud;
The smiling child at her head stood near;
And the long, white tapers shook and bowed,
And said with their tongues of gold.

To the ice lumps of the grave mold:
'How heavy are ye and cold!'
They buried the mother; to the feast
They flocked with the beaks of unclean crows.
The wind came up from the red-eyed east
And bore in its arms the chill, soft snows.
They said to each other: 'Sere
Are the hearts the mother held dear;
Forgotten, her babe plays here !'
The child with the tender snowflakes played,
And the wind on its fingers twined his hair ;
And still by the tall, brown grave he stayed.
Alone in the churchyard lean and bare.
The sods on the high grave cried
To the mother's white breast inside:
Xie still ; in thy deep rest bide !'
Her breast lay still like a long-chilled stone,
Her soul was out on the bleak, grey day;
She saw her child by the grave alone.
With the sods and snow and wind at play.
Said the sharp lips of the rush,
'Red as thy roses, O bush.
With anger the dead can blush !'
A butterfly to the child's breast flew,*
Fluttered its wings on his sweet, round cheek,
Danced by his fingers, small, cold and blue.

The sun strode down past the mountain peak.
The butterfly whispered low
To the child: 'Babe, follow me; know.
Cold is the earth here below.'
The butterfly flew ; followed the child,
Lured by the snowy torch of its wings;
The wind sighed after them soft and wild
Till the stars wedded night with golden rings;
Till the frost upreared its head,
And the ground to it groaned and said:
'The feet of the child are lead !'
The child's head drooped to the brown, sere mold,
On the crackling cones his white breast lay;
The butterfly touched the locks of gold,
The soul of the child sprang from its clay.
The moon to the pine tree stole,
And silver-lipped, said to its bole:
'How strong is the mother's soul!'
The wings of the butterfly grew out
To the mother's arms, long, soft and white;
She folded them warm her babe about,
She kissed his lips into berries bright,
She warmed his soul on her breast;
And the east called out to the west:
'Now the mother's soul will rest!'
Under the roof where the burial feast

Was heavy with meat and red with wine,
Each crossed himself as out of the east
A strange wind swept over oak and pine.
The trees to the home-roof said:
' 'Tis but the airy rush and tread
Of angels greeting thy dead.'

The Rose

The Rose was given to man for this:
He, sudden seeing it in later years.
Should swift remember Love's first lingering kiss
And Grief's last lingering tears;
Or, being blind, should feel its yearning soul
Knit all its piercing perfume round his own,
Till he should see on memory's ample scroll
All roses he had known;
Or, being hard, perchance his finger-tips
Careless might touch the satin of its cup,
And he should feel a dead babe's budding lips
To his lips lifted up;
Or, being deaf and smitten with its star.
Should, on a sudden, almost hear a lark
Rush singing up—the nightingale afar
Sing through the dew-bright dark;
Or, sorrow-lost in paths that round and round

Circle old graves, its keen and vital breath
Should call to him within the yew's bleak bound
Of Life, and not of Death.

Five Poems by Charles G. D. Roberts (1860-1943)

Cambrai and Marne

Before our trenches at Cambrai
We saw their columns cringe away.
We saw their masses melt and reel
Before our line of leaping steel.

A handful to their storming hordes,
We scourged them with the scourge of swords,
And still, the more we slew, the more
Came up for every slain a score.

Between the hedges and the town
The cursing squadrons we rode down;
To stay them we outpoured our blood
Between the beetfields and the wood.

In that red hell of shrieking shell
Unfaltering our gunners fell;
They fell, or ere that day was done,
Beside the last unshattered gun.

But still we held them, like a wall
On which the breakers vainly fall —

Till came the word, and we obeyed,
Reluctant, bleeding, undismayed.

Our feet, astonished, learned retreat;
Our souls rejected still defeat;
Unbroken still, a lion at bay,
We drew back grimly from Cambrai.

In blood and sweat, with slaughter spent,
They thought us beaten as we went,
Till suddenly we turned, and smote
The shout of triumph in their throat.

At last, at last we turned and stood—
And Marne's fair water ran with blood;
We stood by trench and steel and gun,
For now the indignant flight was done.

We ploughed their shaken ranks with fire,
We trod their masses into mire;
Our sabres drove through their retreat
As drives the whirlwind through young wheat.

At last, at last we drove them back
Along their drenched and smoking track;
We hurled them back, in blood and flame.

The reeking ways by which they came.

By cumbered road and desperate ford
How fled their shamed and harassed horde!
Shout, Sons of Freemen, for the day
When Marne so well avenged Cambrai!

Monition

A faint wind, blowing from World's End,
Made strange the city street,
A strange sound mingled in the fall
Of the familiar feet.
Something unseen whirled with the leaves
To tap on door and sill.
Something unknown went whispering by
Even when the wind was still.
And men looked up with startled eyes.
And hurried on their way.
As if they had been called, and told
How brief their day.

At the Gates of Spring

With April here.
And first thin green on the awakening bough,

What wonderful things and dear.
My tired heart to cheer,
At last appear!
Colours of dream afloat on cloud and tree.
So far, so clear,
A spell, a mystery;
And joys that thrill and sing.
New come on mating wing.
The wistfulness and ardour of the spring—
And Thou !

All Night the Lone Cicada

All night the lone cicada
Kept shrilling through the rain—
A voice of joy undaunted
By unforgotten pain.

Down from the wind-blown branches
Rang out the high refrain,
By tumult undisheartened,
By storm assailed in vain.
To looming vasts of mountain

And shadowy deeps of plain,
The ephemeral, brave defiance

Adventured not in vain.

Till to the faltering spirit
And to the weary brain,
From loss and fear and failure,
My joy returned again.

Earth, Sufficing all our Needs

O Earth, sufficing all our needs, O you
With room for body and for spirit, too,
How patient while your children vex their souls
Devising ahen heavens beyond your blue!

Dear dwelling of the immortal and unseen.
How obstinate in my blindness have I been,
Not comprehending what your tender calls,
Veiled promises and reassurance, mean!

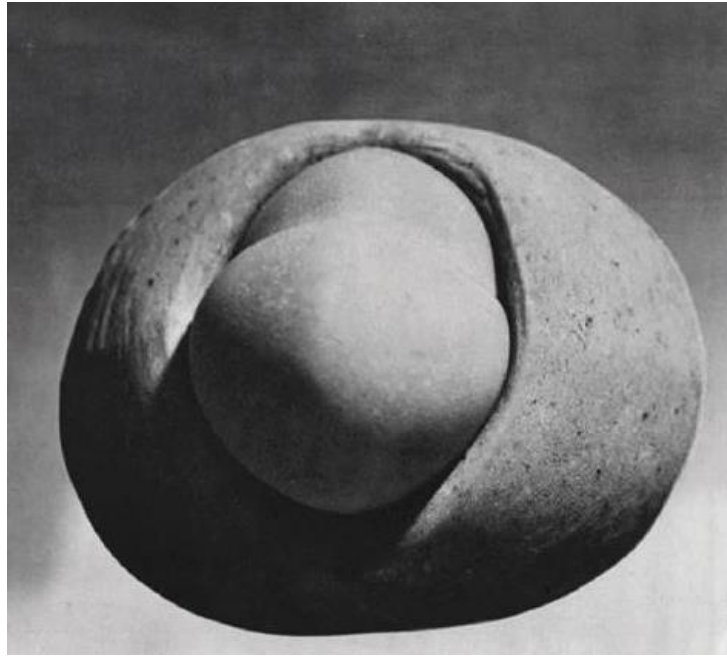
Not far and cold the way that they have gone,
Who thro' your sundering darkness have withdrawn:
Almost within our hand-reach they remain
Who pass beyond the sequence of the dawn.

Not far and strange the heavens, but very near,
Your children's hearts unknowingly hold dear.

At times we almost catch the door swung wide—
An unforgotten voice almost we hear.

I am the heir of heaven—and you are just.
You, you alone I know, and you I trust.
Tho' I seek God beyond the farthest star.
Here shall I find Him, in your deathless dust.

Japanese Organic Art from the 1930's ...



Prose

Bottle Found at Sea by Louis Aragon

Lost as I am by the edge of this profound lake in which is mirrored an unknown sky, shall I ever attain the linking of my existence with the human centuries whose faint trail seems scarcely to penetrate these regions?

Even the sense of time is forgotten: whether I go toward yesterday or tomorrow, there is no way of knowing. And these words suggest nothing more, since it is impossible to tell whether the ages have been arrested forever or whether their flight has been hastened with the uniformly accelerated rapidity of a body approaching the sun. If only I had a watch with me to end this uncertainty.

A diffuse light reigns eternally over this world and the sun that is of space as well as of time has deserted this immutable firmament. The lovely liquid expanse which composes my horizon rounds out toward the west and receives at the northwest a stream that flows from the north. As far as I can ascertain with the aid of my compass, its direction seems to be north-northeast by south-southwest.

But how to measure its extent? I have made the circumference of the lake several times without arriving at even the haziest idea as to the year or minute of the length of the voyage.

At first glance I had estimated the circumference to be a hundred miles. Later conjectures brought this figure up from a hundred to a hundred and

fifty or a hundred and sixty miles. The actual span must be somewhere between these two numbers. Nor can the time that I place at the disposal of this investigation serve as a yard-stick: it comprises anything from a few sparse thoughts to a desert of ennui and vexation.

The beatings of my pulse inform me no better, their irregularities born no doubt of the helplessness in which I find myself to appraise equivalents amid such astounding phenomena. The vegetation in its development follows no habitual or logical order of growth. There are trees here which grow downward, flowers that give forth leaves, buds that the wind carries off to make a carpet for me.

Certain plants remain invariable; others seem as ephemeral as my regard. Suddenly I feel myself ageing- as I lift my eyelids. I should certainly make a poor hour-glass. How I could have blundered about in time; I still wonder at this. I had accepted with real pleasure an invitation to go to Normandy and stay at the villa of a friend, Celeste P , . . married recently.

Paris was thinning out, and the thought of spending a few days by the sea-shore where the air was so pure and refreshing with the nip of salt, was by no means unpleasant to me. It had been a superb day. The sun brimmed over in the fields. The dust invaded the railroad coaches, but nearing the sea we scented its delicious tang and it went right to our hearts.

Getting off the train, I looked about me and saw that the sky was sky-blue. Celeste advanced toward me with her hand outstretched. Suddenly a fit of

abstraction seized me, I thought of other things: once you have thought of other things, you are done for. Impossible to get back to the point of departure, and following the thread I reached some desert region at some indetermined epoch of the universe.

At first I did not understand what was happening to me. I said to myself: "This cannot last". Now I do not even know whether it does last. I have come to believe that in the temporal impasse into which I have strayed there is no soul that lives. Only a companion in misfortune could help me to regain life. Together we could reconstitute time. Simply a matter of comparison. Alone, I lose grip on myself in wrestling with my identity: if I remained the same from one minute to another how could I experience the transformation announced by this movement of the clock-hand?

I end by losing all track of the continuity of my thought. For in the most general sense all is logical to me in solitude, and, writing as I am for chance salvagers, for blind savages, or for the deaf tides that carry my bottle, I can scarcely trust that the language I use will ever be understood by any man other than myself. Why, it is impossible for me to read it over: I am only intelligible to myself in flashes.

My sheet of paper all at once becomes perfectly blank again, or covered with ideas I have never had. The words themselves come invested in strange masks, or bare and different from each other. Bursting balloons. Pastimes, pleasures, leisure, salt of life, all seem strange customs, rites devised to hasten death along. Fire is what I find most mysterious of all.

The novel I kept in my pocket during the entire journey has remained there and I reassemble in it my only memories of human life. Preposterous existence bounded only by the most elementary of questions. I take, for instance, from my book, the character called George, hotelkeeper. How the emblems of all the trades balance themselves unhappily in the blue city of the vision. This horrible limitation, the branch of holly which the man fixed above his door one morning condemned him to be nothing but an innkeeper for all eternity.

Is it not true that in books sudden illuminations flash between the conventional characters one longs to resemble? The choice between two destinies is tragically lost in the disordered movements of the heart. A very beautiful woman, two or three singular exaltations, a moment of perfect happiness, the entire life of a citizen .of the world reduces itself to a few metaphors more wretched and vulgar than a carpenter's shop: the split up wood hardly arouses any enthusiasm.

Through staring into space for a long time there grows in my breast the image of the red and blue infinite in which life pulses at a given speed. Adjust yourself any way you please: to regard the universe, or to interrogate your heart; it cannot be done without fatigue.

All ends with a red lamp balanced against the wind, and later, the horses having delivered the parcel, trotting briskly along the pavement of the suburbs. Sun of cries without reason, mad plants, the earth flees we know

not where and we press the tablets of physical law against our vest-pockets with little commendatory smiles.

With what great ingenuity we bind for ourselves with ribbon-formulae a bouquet of marguerites and of roses, the functions of space and time yielding indulgently to our will! In the meantime I am quite beautifully lost in duration, and my movements are restricted from just here to there.

But I feel more and more, I almost said with every day, the elements of my consciousness rotting- and melting. I have only to give utterance to a few more of such notions and it is all over with my chances of getting back to the land of clocks. And yet, it is the gradual disintegration of my personality that I have the strongest misgivings about.

Since I am alone I cannot go mad.

The sponges of silence, the crystals of vacuum, where was I amongst them?

I hurry on, bicyclist lost after the departure of the rear wheel, maintaining myself miraculously by one perpetual revolution. Equilibrium denotes nothing but unstable position, or habitual difficulty, if you will.

Yes, crawling fear has its little day of terror. I choke now and then through forgetting to breathe at regular intervals.

Sensuousness in this brothel-world! Best not to think of it.

The geometrical progression of lust is not conceived as apart from all continuity. The four operations, very nice to talk about.

Fly in sticky-paper, inkwell of clouds, who will give me back the fancy-cake with an Eiffel Tower relief, *the City of Light*, as it is called.

{First published in *Secession Magazine*, Number 1, 1922}

Painting as a Pastime by Sir Winston Churchill

{an excerpt from *Thoughts and Adventures*, 1932}

To have reached the age of forty without ever handling a brush or fiddling with a pencil, to have regarded with mature eye the painting of pictures of any kind as a mystery, to have stood agape before the chalk of the pavement artist, and then suddenly to find oneself plunged in the middle of a new and intense form of interest and action with paints and palettes and canvases, and not to be discouraged by results, is an astonishing and enriching experience. I hope it may be shared by others. I should be glad if these lines induced others to try the experiment which I have tried, and if some at least were to find themselves dowered with an absorbing new amusement delightful to themselves, and at any rate not violently harmful to man or beast.

I hope this is modest enough: because there is no subject on which I feel more humble or yet at the same time more natural. I do not presume to explain how to paint, but only how to get enjoyment. Do not turn the superior eye of critical passivity upon these efforts. Buy a paint-box and have a try. If you need something to occupy your leisure, to divert your mind from the daily round, to illuminate your holidays, do not be too ready to believe that you cannot find what you want here. Even at the advanced age of forty! It would be a sad pity to shuffle or scramble along through one's playtime with golf and bridge, pottering, loitering, shifting from one heel to the other, wondering what on earth to do—as perhaps is the fate of some unhappy beings—when all the while, if you only knew, there is close at hand

a wonderful new world of thought and craft, a sunlit garden gleaming with light and colour of which you have the key in your waistcoat pocket. Inexpensive independence, a mobile and perennial pleasure apparatus, new mental food and exercise, the old harmonies and symmetries in an entirely different language, an added interest to every common scene, an occupation for every idle hour, an unceasing voyage of entrancing discovery— these are high prizes. Make quite sure they are not yours. After all, if you try, and fail, there is not much harm done. The nursery will grab what the studio has rejected. And then you can always go out and kill some animal, humiliate some rival on the links, or despoil some friend across the green table. You will not be worse off in any way. In fact you will be better off. You will know ‘beyond a peradventure,’ to quote a phrase disagreeably reminiscent, that that is really what you were meant to do in your hours of relaxation.

But if, on the contrary, you are inclined—late in life though it be—to reconnoitre a foreign sphere of limitless extent, then be persuaded that the first quality that is needed is Audacity. There really is no time for the deliberate approach. Two years of drawing-lessons, three years of copying woodcuts, five years of plaster casts—these are for the young. They have enough to bear. And this thorough grounding is for those who, hearing the call in the morning of their days, are able to make painting their paramount lifelong vocation. The truth and beauty of line and form which by the slightest touch or twist of the brush a real artist imparts to every feature of his design must be founded on long, hard, persevering apprenticeship and a practice so habitual that it has become instinctive. We must not be too

ambitious. We cannot aspire to masterpieces. We may content ourselves with a joy ride in a paint-box. And for this Audacity is the only ticket.

I shall now relate my personal experience. When I left the Admiralty at the end of May, 1915, I still remained a member of the Cabinet and of the War Council. In this position I knew everything and could do nothing. The change from the intense executive activities of each day's work at the Admiralty to the narrowly-measured duties of a counselor left me gasping. Like a sea-beast fished up from the depths, or a diver too suddenly hoisted, my veins threatened to burst from the fall in pressure. I had great anxiety and no means of relieving it; I had vehement convictions and small power to give effect to them. I had to watch the unhappy casting-away of great opportunities, and the feeble execution of plans which I had launched and in which I heartily believed. I had long hours of utterly unwonted leisure in which to contemplate the frightful unfolding of the War. At a moment when every fibre of my being was inflamed to action, I was forced to remain a spectator of the tragedy, placed cruelly in a front seat. And then it was that the Muse of Painting came to my rescue—out of charity and out of chivalry, because after all she had nothing to do with me — and said, ‘Are these toys any good to you? They amuse some people.’

Some experiments one Sunday in the country with the children's paint-box led me to procure the next morning a complete outfit for painting in oils.

Having bought the colours, an easel, and a canvas, the next step was *to begin*. But what a step to take! The palette gleamed with beads of colour;

fair and white rose the canvas; the empty brush hung poised, heavy with destiny, irresolute in the air. My hand seemed arrested by a silent veto. But after all the sky on this occasion was unquestionably blue, and a pale blue at that. There could be no doubt that blue paint mixed with white should be put on the top part of the canvas. One really does not need to have had an artist's training to see that. It is a starting-point open to all. So very gingerly I mixed a little blue paint on the palette with a very small brush, and then with infinite precaution made a mark about as big as a bean upon the affronted snow-white shield. It was a challenge, a deliberate challenge; but so subdued, so halting, indeed so cataleptic, that it deserved no response. At that moment the loud approaching sound of a motor-car was heard in the drive. From this chariot there stepped swiftly and lightly none other than the gifted wife of Sir John Lavery. 'Painting! But what are you hesitating about? Let me have a brush — the big one.' Splash into the turpentine, wallop into the blue and the white, frantic flourish on the palette—clean no longer—and then several large, fierce strokes and slashes of blue on the absolutely cowering canvas. Anyone could see that it could not hit back. No evil fate avenged the jaunty violence. The canvas grinned in helplessness before me. The spell was broken. The sickly inhibitions rolled away. I seized the largest brush and fell upon my victim with Berserk fury. I have never felt any awe of a canvas since.

Everyone knows the feelings with which one stands shivering on a spring-board, the shock when a friendly foe steals up behind and hurls you into the flood, and the ardent glow which thrills you as you emerge breathless from the plunge.

This beginning with Audacity, or being thrown into the middle of it, is already a very great part of the art of painting. But there is more in it than that.

La peinture k l'huile
Est bien difficile,
Mais c'est beaucoup plus beau
Que la peinture à l'eau.

I write no word in disparagement of water-colours. But there really is nothing like oils. You have a medium at your disposal which offers real power, if you only can find out how to use it. Moreover, it is easier to get a certain distance along the road by its means than by water-colour. First of all, you can correct mistakes much more easily. One sweep of the palette knife 'lifts' the blood and tears of a morning from the canvas and enables a fresh start to be made; indeed the canvas is all the better for past impressions. Secondly, you can approach your problem from any direction. You need not build downwards awkwardly from white paper to your darkest dark. You may strike where you please, beginning if you will with a moderate central arrangement of middle tones, and then hurling in the extremes when the psychological moment comes,

Lastly, the pigment itself is such nice stuff to handle (if it does not retaliate). You can build it on layer after layer if you like. You can keep on experimenting. You can change your plan to meet the exigencies of time or weather. And always remember you can scrape it all away.

Just to paint is great fun. The colours are lovely to look at and delicious to squeeze out. Matching them, however crudely with what you see is fascinating and absolutely absorbing. Try it if you have not done so—before you die. As one slowly begins to escape from the difficulties of choosing the right colour, and laying them on in the right places and in the right way, wider considerations come into view. One begins to see, for instance, that painting a picture is like fighting a battle; and trying to paint a picture is, I suppose, like trying to fight a battle. It is, if anything, more exciting than fighting it successfully. But the principle is the same. It is the same kind of problem, as unfolding a long, sustained, interlocked argument. It is a proposition which, whether of few or numberless parts, is commanded by a single unity of conception. And we think—though I cannot tell—that painting a great picture must require an intellect on the grand scale. There must be that all-embracing view which presents the beginning and the end, the whole and each part, as one instantaneous impression retentively and untiringly held in the mind. When we look at the larger Turners—canvases yards wide and tall—and observe that they are all done in one piece and represent one single second of time, and that every innumerable detail, however small, however distant, however subordinate, is set forth naturally and in its true proportion and relation, without effort, without failure, we must feel in presence of an intellectual manifestation the equal in quality and intensity of the finest achievements of warlike action, of forensic argument, or of scientific or philosophical adjudication.

In all battles two things are usually required of the Commander-in-Chief: to make a good plan for his army and, secondly, to keep a strong reserve. Both

these are also obligatory upon the painter. To make a plan, thorough reconnaissance of the country where the battle is to be fought is needed. Its fields, its mountains, its rivers, its bridges, its trees, its flowers, its atmosphere—all require and repay attentive observation from a special point of view. One is quite astonished to find how many things there are in the landscape, and in every object in it, one never noticed before. And this is a tremendous new pleasure and interest which invests every walk or drive with an added object. So many colours on the hillside, each different in shadow and in sunlight; such brilliant reflections in the pool, each a key lower than what they repeat; such lovely lights gilding or silvering surface or outline, all tinted exquisitely with pale colour, rose, orange, green, or violet. I found myself instinctively as I walked noting the tint and character of a leaf, the dreamy purple shades of mountains, the exquisite lacery of winter branches, the dim pale silhouettes of far horizons. And I had lived for over forty years without ever noticing any of them except in a general way, as one might look at a crowd and say, ‘What a lot of people!’

I think this heightened sense of observation of Nature is one of the chief delights that have come to me through trying to paint. No doubt many people who are lovers of art have acquired it in a high degree without actually practising. But I expect that nothing will make one observe more quickly or more thoroughly than having to face the difficulty of representing the thing observed. And mind you, if you do observe accurately and with refinement, and if you do record what you have seen with tolerable correspondence, the result follows on the canvas with startling obedience. Even if only four or five main features are seized and truly recorded, these

by themselves will carry a lot of ill-success or half-success. Answer five big questions out of all the hundreds in the examination paper correctly and well, and though you may not win a prize, at any rate you will not be absolutely ploughed.

But in order to make his plan, the General must not only reconnoitre the battle-ground, he must also study the achievements of the great Captains of the past. He must bring the observations he has collected in the field into comparison with the treatment of similar incidents by famous chiefs. Then the galleries of Europe take on a new—and to me at least a severely practical—interest. ‘This, then, is how painted a cataract. Exactly, and there is that same light I noticed last week in the waterfall at.’ And so on. You see the difficulty that baffled you yesterday; and you see how easily it has been overcome by a great or even by a skilful painter. Not only is your observation of Nature sensibly improved and developed, but you look at the masterpieces of art with an analyzing and a comprehending eye.

The whole world is open with all its treasures. The simplest objects have their beauty. Every garden presents innumerable fascinating problems. Every land, every parish, has its own tale to tell. And there are many lands differing from each other in countless ways, and each presenting delicious variants of colour, light, form, and definition. Obviously, then, armed with a paint-box, one cannot be bored, one cannot be left at a loose end, one cannot ‘have several days on one’s hands.’ Good gracious! what there is to admire and how little time there is to see it in! For the first time one begins to envy Methuselah. No doubt he made a very indifferent use of his opportunities.

But it is in the use and withholding of their reserves that the great commanders have generally excelled. After all, when once the last reserve has been thrown in, the commander's part is played. If that does not win the battle, he has nothing else to give. The event must be left to luck and to the fighting troops. But these last, in the absence of high direction, are apt to get into sad confusion, all mixed together in a nasty mess, without order or plan—and consequently without effect. Mere masses count no more. The largest brush, the brightest colours cannot even make an impression. The pictorial battlefield becomes a sea of mud mercifully veiled by the fog of war. It is evident there has been a serious defeat. Even though the General plunges in himself and emerges bespattered, as he sometimes does, he will not retrieve the day.

In painting, the reserves consist in Proportion or Relation. And it is here that the art of the painter marches along the road which is traversed by all the greatest harmonies in thought. At one side of the palette there is white, at the other black; and neither is ever used 'neat'. Between these two rigid limits all the action must lie, all the power required must be generated. Black and white themselves placed in juxtaposition make no great impression; and yet they are the most that you can do in pure contrast. It is wonderful—after one has tried and failed often—to see how easily and surely the true artist is able to produce every effect of light and shade, of sunshine and shadow, of distance or nearness, simply by expressing justly the relations between the different planes and surfaces with which he is dealing. We think that this is founded upon a sense of proportion, trained no doubt by practice, but which

in its essence is a frigid manifestation of mental power and size. We think that the same mind's eye that can justly survey and appraise and prescribe beforehand the values of a truly great picture in one all-embracing regard, in one flash of simultaneous and homogeneous comprehension, would also with a certain acquaintance with the special technique be able to pronounce with sureness upon any other high activity of the human intellect. This was certainly true of the great Italians.

I have written in this way to show how varied are the delights which may be gained by those who enter hopefully and thoughtfully upon the pathway of painting; how enriched they will be in their daily vision, how fortified in their independence, how happy in their leisure. Whether you feel that your soul is pleased by the conception or contemplation of harmonies, or that your mind is stimulated by the aspect of magnificent problems, or whether you are content to find fun in trying to observe and depict the jolly things you see, the vistas of possibility are limited only by the shortness of life. Every day you may make progress. Every step may be fruitful. Yet there will stretch out before you an ever-lengthening, ever-ascending, ever-improving path. You know you will never get to the end of the journey. But this, so far from discouraging, only adds to the joy and glory of the climb.

Try it, then, before it is too late and before you mock at me. Try it while there is time to overcome the preliminary difficulties. Learn enough of the language in your prime to open this new literature to your age. Plant a garden in which you can sit when digging days are done. It may be only a small garden, but you will see it grow. Year by year it will bloom and ripen.

Year by year it will be better cultivated. The weeds will be cast out The fruit-trees will be pruned and trained. The flowers will bloom in more beautiful combinations. There will be sunshine there even in the winter-time, and cool shade, and the play of shadow on the pathway in the shining days of June.

I must say I like bright colours. I agree with Ruskin in his denunciation of that school of painting who ‘eat slate-pencil and chalk, and assure everybody that they are nicer and purer than strawberries and plums.’ I cannot pretend to feel impartial about the colours. I rejoice with the brilliant ones, and am genuinely sorry for the poor browns. When I get to heaven I mean to spend a considerable portion of my first million years in painting, and so get to the bottom of the subject. But then I shall require a still gayer palette than I get here below. I expect orange and vermilion will be the darkest, duldest colours upon it, and beyond them there will be a whole range of wonderful new colours which will delight the celestial eye.

Chance led me one autumn to a secluded nook on the Côte d’Azur, between Marseilles and Toulon, and there I fell in with one or two painters who revelled in the methods of the modern French school. These were disciples of Cezanne. They view Nature as a mass of shimmering light in which forms and surfaces are comparatively unimportant, indeed, hardly visible, but which gleams and glows with beautiful harmonies and contrasts of colour. Certainly it was of great interest to me to come suddenly in contact with this entirely different way of looking at things. I had hitherto painted the sea flat, with long, smooth strokes of mixed pigment in which the tints varied only

by gradations. Now I must try to represent it by innumerable small separate lozenge-shaped points and patches of colour—often pure colour—so that it looked more like a tessellated pavement than a marine picture. It sounds curious. All the same, do not be in a hurry to reject the method. Go back a few yards and survey the result. Each of these- little points of colour is now playing his part in the general effect Individually invisible, he sets up a strong radiation, of which the eye is conscious without detecting the cause. Look also at the blue of the Mediterranean. How can you depict and record it? Certainly not by any single colour that was ever manufactured. The only way in which that luminous intensity of blue can be simulated is by this multitude of tiny points of varied colour all in true relation to the rest of the scheme. Difficult? Fascinating!

Nature presents itself to the eye through the agency of these individual points of light, each of which sets up the vibrations peculiar to its colour. The brilliancy of a picture must therefore depend partly upon the frequency with which these points are found on any given area of the canvas, and partly on their just relation to one another. Ruskin says in his *Elements of Drawing*, from which I have already quoted, ‘You will not, in Turner’s largest oil pictures, perhaps six or seven feet long by four or five high, find one spot of colour as large as a grain of wheat ungradated.’ But the gradations of Turner differ from those of the modern French school by being gently and almost imperceptibly evolved one from another instead of being bodily and even roughly separated; and the brush of Turner followed the form of the objects he depicted, while our French friends often seem to take a pride in directly opposing it. For instance, they would prefer to paint a sea

with up and down strokes rather than with horizontal ; or a tree-trunk from right to left rather than up and down. This, I expect, is due to falling in love with one's theories, and making sacrifices of truth to them in order to demonstrate fidelity and admiration.

But surely we owe a debt to those who have so wonderfully vivified, brightened, and illuminated modern landscape painting. Have not Manet and Monet, Cezanne and Matisse, rendered to painting something of the same service which Keats and Shelley gave to poetry after the solemn and ceremonious literary perfections of the eighteenth century? They have brought back to the pictorial art a new draught of *joie de vivre*; and the beauty of their work is instinct with gaiety, and floats in sparkling air.

I do not expect these masters would particularly appreciate my defence, but I must avow an increasing attraction to their work. Lucid and exact expression is one of the characteristics of the French mind. The French language has been made the instrument of the admirable gift. Frenchmen talk and write just as well about painting as they have done about love, about war, about diplomacy, or cooking. Their terminology is precise and complete. They are therefore admirably equipped to be teachers in the theory of any of these arts. Their critical facility is so powerfully developed that it is perhaps some restraint upon achievement. But it is a wonderful corrective to others as well as to' themselves.

My French friend, for instance, after looking at some of my daubs, took me round the galleries of Paris, pausing here and there. Wherever he paused, I

found myself before a picture which I particularly admired. He then explained that it was quite easy to tell, from the kind of things I had been trying to do, what were the things I liked. Never having taken any interest in pictures till I tried to paint, I had no preconceived opinions. I just felt, for reasons I could not fathom, that I liked some much more than others. I was astonished that anyone else should, on the most cursory observation of my work, be able so surely to divine a taste which I had never consciously formed. My friend said that it is not a bad thing to know nothing at all about pictures, but to have a matured mind trained in other things and a new strong interest for painting. The elements are there from which a true taste in art can be formed with time and guidance, and there are no obstacles or imperfect conceptions in the way. I hope this is true. Certainly the last part is true.

Once you begin to study it, all Nature is equally interesting and equally charged with beauty. I was shown a picture by Cezanne of a blank wall of a house, which he had made instinct with the most delicate lights and colours. Now I often amuse myself when I am looking at a wall or a flat surface of any kind by trying to distinguish all the different colours and tints which can be discerned upon it, and considering whether these arise from reflections or from natural hue. You would be astonished the first time you tried this to see how many and what beautiful colours there are even in the most commonplace objects, and the more carefully and frequently you look the more variations do you perceive.

But these are no reasons for limiting oneself to the plainest and most ordinary objects and scenes. Mere prettiness of scene, to be sure, is not needed for a beautiful picture. In fact, artificially-made pretty places are very often a hindrance to a good picture. Nature will hardly stand a double process of beautification: one layer of idealism on top of another is too much of a good thing. But a vivid scene, a brilliant atmosphere, novel and charming lights, impressive contrasts, if they strike the eye all at once, arouse an interest and an ardour which will certainly be reflected in the work which you try to do, and will make it seem easier.

It would be interesting if some real authority investigated carefully the part which memory plays in painting. We look at the object with an intent regard, then at the palette, and thirdly at the canvas. The canvas receives a message dispatched usually a few seconds before from the natural object. But it has come through a post-office *en route*. It has been transmitted in code. It has been turned from light into paint. It reaches the canvas a cryptogram. Not until it has been placed in its correct relation to everything else that is on the canvas can it be deciphered, is its meaning apparent, is it translated once again from mere pigment into light. And the light this time is not of Nature but of Art. The whole of this considerable process is carried through on the wings or the wheels of memory. In most cases we think it is the wings—airy and quick like a butterfly from flower to flower. But all heavy traffic and "all that has to go a long journey must travel on wheels.

In painting in the open air the sequence of actions is so rapid that the process of translation into and out of pigment may seem to be unconscious. But all

the greatest landscapes have been painted indoors, and often long after the first impressions were gathered. In a dim cellar the Dutch or Italian master recreated the gleaming ice of a Netherlands carnival or the lustrous sunshine of Venice or the Campagna. Here, then, is required a formidable memory of the visual kind. Not only do we develop our powers of observation, but also those of carrying the record—of carrying it through an extraneous medium and of reproducing it, hours, days, or even months after the scene has vanished or the sunlight died.

I was told by a friend that when Whistler guided a school in Paris he made his pupils observe their model on the ground floor, and then run upstairs and paint their picture piece by piece on the floor above. As they became more proficient he put their easels up a storey higher, till at last the *élite* were scampering with their decision up six flights into the attic — praying it would not evaporate on the way. This is, perhaps, only a tale. But it shows effectively of what enormous importance a trained, accurate, retentive memory must be to an artist; and conversely what a useful exercise painting may be for the development of an accurate and retentive memory.

There is no better exercise for the would-be artist than to study and devour a picture, and then, without looking at it again, to attempt the next day to reproduce it. Nothing can more exactly measure the progress both of observation and memory. It is still harder to compose out of many separate, well-retained impressions, aided though they be by sketches and colour notes, a new complete conception. But this is the only way in which great landscapes have been painted—or can be painted. The size of the canvas

alone precludes its being handled out of doors. The fleeting light imposes a rigid time limit. The same light never returns. One cannot go back day after day without the picture getting stale. The painter must choose between a rapid impression, fresh and warm and living, but probably deserving only of a short life, and the cold profound, intense effort of memory, knowledge, and willpower, prolonged perhaps for weeks, from which a masterpiece can alone result. It is much better not to fret too much about the latter. Leave to the masters of art trained by a life time of devotion the wonderful process of picture-building; and picture-creation. Go out into the sunlight and be happy with what you see.

Painting is complete as a distraction. I know of nothing which, without exhausting the body, more entirely absorbs the mind. Whatever the worries of the hour or the threats of the future, once the picture has begun to flow along, there is no room for them in the mental screen. They pass out into shadow and darkness. All one's mental light, such as it is, becomes concentrated on the task. Time stands respectfully aside, and it is only after many hesitations that luncheon knocks gruffly at the door. When I have had to stand up on parade, or even, I regret to say, in church, for half an hour at a time, I have always felt that the erect position is not natural to man, has only been painfully acquired, and is only with fatigue and difficulty maintained. But no one who is fond of painting finds the slightest inconvenience, as long as the interest holds, in standing to paint for three or four hours at a stretch.

Lastly, let me say a word on painting as a spur to travel. There is really nothing like it. Every day and all day is provided with its expedition and its

occupation—cheap, attainable, innocent, absorbing, recuperative. The vain racket of the tourist gives place to the calm enjoyment of the philosopher, intensified by an enthralling sense of action and endeavour. Every country where the sun shines and every district in it has a theme of its own. The lights, the atmosphere, the aspect, the spirit, are all different; but each has its native charm. Even if you are only a poor painter you can feel the influence of the scene, guiding your brush, selecting the tubes you squeeze or to the palette. Even if you cannot portray it as you see it, you feel it, you know it, and you admire it forever. When people rush about Europe in the train from one glittering centre of work or pleasure to another, passing—at enormous expense — through a series of mammoth hotels and blatant carnivals, they little know what they are missing, and how cheaply priceless things can be obtained. The painter wanders and loiters contentedly from place to place, always on the look out for some brilliant butterfly of a picture which can be caught and set up and carried safely home.

Now I am learning to like painting even on dull days. But in my hot youth I demanded sunshine. Sir William Orpen advised me to visit Avignon on account of its wonderful light, and certainly there is no more delightful centre for a would be painter's activities : then Egypt, fierce and brilliant, presenting in infinite variety the single triplex theme of the Nile, the desert, and the sun; or Palestine, a land of rare beauty—the beauty of the turquoise and the opal—which well deserves the attention of some real artist, and has never been portrayed to the extent that is its due. And what of India? Who has ever interpreted its lurid splendours? But after all, if only the sun will shine, one does not need to go beyond one's own country. There is nothing

more intense than the burnished steel and gold of a Highland stream; and at the beginning and close of almost every day the Thames displays to the citizens of London glories and delights which one must travel far to rival

Creative Death by Henry Miller

“I don’t want my Fate or Providence to treat me well. I am essentially a fighter.” It was towards the end of his life that Lawrence wrote this, but at the very threshold of his career he was saying: “We have to hate our immediate predecessors to get free of their authority.”

The men to whom he owed everything, the great spirits on whom he fed and nourished himself, whom he had to reject in order to assert his own power, his own vision, were they not like himself men who went to the source? Were they not all animated by that same idea which Lawrence voiced over and over again—that the sun itself will never become stale, nor the earth barren? Were they not, all of them, in their search for God, for that “clue which is missing inside men,” victims of the Holy Ghost?

Who were his predecessors? To whom, time and again before ridiculing and exposing them, did he acknowledge his indebtedness? Jesus certainly, and Nietzsche, and Whitman and Dostoyevsky. All the poets of life, the mystics, who in denouncing civilization contributed most heavily to the lie of civilization.

Lawrence was tremendously influenced by Dostoyevsky. Of all his forerunners, Jesus included, it was Dostoyevsky whom he had most difficulty in shaking off, in surpassing, in “transcending.” Lawrence had always looked upon the sun as the source of life, and the moon as the symbol of nonbeing. Life and Death—like a mariner he kept before him

constantly these two poles. “*He who gets nearer the sun,*” he said, “*is leader, the aristocrat of aristocrats. Or, he who like Dostoyevsky, gets nearer the moon of our non-being.*” With the in-betweens he had no concern. “*But the most powerful being,*” he concludes, “*is that which moves towards the as-yet-unknown blossom!*” He saw man as a seasonal phenomenon, a moon that waxes and wanes, a seed that emerges out of primal darkness to return again therein. Life brief, transitory, eternally fixed between the two poles of being and nonbeing. Without the clue, without the revelation no life, but being sacrificed to existence. Immortality he interpreted as this futile wish for endless existence. To him this living death was the Purgatory in which man ceaselessly struggles.

Strange as it may seem today to say, the aim of life is to live, and to live means to be aware, joyously, drunkenly, serenely, divinely *aware*. In this state of God-like awareness one sings; in this realm the world exists as poem. No why or wherefore, no direction, no goal, no striving, no evolving. Like the enigmatic Chinaman one is rapt by the ever changing spectacle of passing phenomena. This is the sublime, the amoral state of the artist, he who lives only in the moment, the visionary moment of utter, far-seeing lucidity. Such clear, icy sanity that it seems like madness. By the force and power of the artist’s vision the static, synthetic whole which is called the world is destroyed. The artist gives back to us a vital, singing universe, alive in all its parts.

In a way the artist is always acting against the time-destiny movement. He is always a-historical. *He accepts Time absolutely*, as Whitman says, in the

sense that any way he rolls (with tail in mouth) is direction; in the sense that any moment, every moment, may be the all; for the artist there is nothing but the present, the eternal here and now, the expanding infinite moment which is flame and song. And when he succeeds in establishing this criterion of passionate experience (which is what Lawrence meant by “*obeying the Holy Ghost*”) then, and only then, is he asserting his humanness. Then only does he live out his pattern as Man. Obedient to every urge—without distinction of morality, ethics, law, custom, etc. He opens himself to *all* influences—everything nourishes him. Everything is gravy to him, including what he does *not* understand—*particularly* what he does *not* understand.

This final reality which the artist comes to recognize in his maturity is that symbolic paradise of the womb, that “[*middle kingdom*]” which the psychologists place somewhere between the conscious and the unconscious, that pre-natal security and immortality and union with nature from which he must wrest his freedom. Each time he is spiritually born he dreams of the impossible, the miraculous, dreams he can break the wheel of life and death, avoid the struggle and the drama, the pain and the suffering of life. His poem is the legend wherein he buries himself, wherein he relates of the mysteries of birth and death—*his* reality, *his* experience. He buries himself in his tomb of poem in order to achieve that immortality which is denied him as a physical being.

[*The Middle Kingdom*] is a projection into the spiritual domain of his biologic condition of non-being. To be is to have mortal shape, mortal conditions, to struggle, to evolve. Paradise is, like the dream of the

Buddhists, a Nirvana where there is no more personality and hence no conflict. It is the expression of man's wish to triumph over reality, over becoming. The artist's dream of the impossible, the miraculous, is simply the resultant of his inability to adapt himself to reality. He creates, therefore, a reality of his own—in the poem—a reality which is suitable to him, a reality in which he can live out his unconscious desires, wishes, dreams. The poem is the dream made flesh, in a two-fold sense: as work of art, and as life, which is a work of art. When man becomes fully conscious of his powers, his role, his destiny, he is an artist and he ceases his struggle with reality. *He becomes a traitor to the human race.* He creates war because he has become permanently out of step with the rest of humanity. He sits on the door-step of his mother's womb with his ... memories and his incestuous longings and he refuses to budge. He lives out his dream of Paradise. He transmutes his real experience of life into spiritual equations. He scorns the ordinary alphabet, which yields at most only a grammar of thought, and adopts the symbol, the metaphor, the ideograph. *He writes [as an enlightened].* He creates an impossible world out of an incomprehensible language, a lie that enchants and enslaves men. It is not that he is incapable of living. On the contrary, his zest for life is so powerful, so voracious that it forces him to kill himself over and over. He dies many times in order to live innumerable lives. In this way he wreaks his revenge upon life and works his power over men. He creates the legend of himself, the lie wherein he establishes himself as hero and God, the lie wherein he triumphs over life.

Perhaps one of the chief difficulties in wrestling with the personality of a creative individual lies in the powerful obscurity in which, wittingly or

unwittingly, he lodges himself. In the case of a man like Lawrence we are dealing with one who glorified the obscurity, a man who raised to the highest that source and manifestation of all life, the body. All efforts to clarify his doctrine involve a return to, and a renewed wrestling with, the eternal, fundamental problems which confronted him. He is forever bringing one back to the source, to the very heart of the cosmos, through a mystic labyrinth. His work is altogether one of symbol and metaphor. Phoenix, Crown, Rainbow, Plumed Serpent, all these symbols center about the same obsessive idea: *the resolution of two opposites in the form of a mystery*. Despite his progression from one plane of conflict to another, from one problem of life to another, the symbolic character of his work remains constant and unchanged. He is a man of one idea: *that life has a symbolic significance*. Which is to say that life and art are one.

In his choice of the Rainbow, for example, one sees how he attempted to glorify the eternal hope in man, the illusion on which his justification as artist rests. In all his symbols, the Phoenix and the Crown particularly, for they were his earliest and most potent symbols, we observe that he was but giving concrete form to his real nature, his artist being. For the artist in man is the undying symbol of the union between his warring selves. Life has to be given a meaning because of the obvious fact that it has no meaning. Something has to be created, as a healing and goading intervention, between life and death, because the conclusion that life points to is death and to that conclusive fact man instinctively and persistently shuts his eyes. The sense of mystery, which is at the bottom of all art, is the amalgam of all the nameless terrors which the cruel reality of death inspires. Death then has to

be defeated—or disguised, or transmogrified. *But in the attempt to defeat death man has been inevitably obliged to defeat life, for the two are inextricably related.* Life moves on to death, and to deny one is to deny the other. The stern sense of destiny which every creative individual reveals lies in this awareness of the goal, this acceptance of the goal, this moving on towards a fatality, one with the inscrutable forces that animate him and drive him on.

All history is the record of man's signal failure to thwart his destiny—the record, in other words, of the few men of destiny who, through the recognition of their symbolic role, made history. All the lies and evasions by which man has nourished himself—*civilization*, in a word—are the fruits of the creative artist. It is the creative nature of man which has refused to let him lapse back into that unconscious unity with life which characterizes the animal world from which he made his escape. As man traces the stages of his physical evolution in his embryonic life, so, when ejected from the womb, he repeats, in the course of his development from childhood to old age, the spiritual evolution of man. In the person of the *artist* the whole *historical* evolution of man is recapitulated. His work is one grand metaphor, revealing through image and symbol the whole cycle of cultural development through which man has passed from primitive to effete civilized being.

When we trace back the roots of the artist's evolution, we rediscover in his being the various incarnations, or aspects of hero which man has always represented himself to be—king, warrior, saint, magician, priest, etc. The

process is a long and devious one. It is all a conquest of fear. The question *why* leads to the question *whither* and then *how*. Escape is the deepest wish. Escape from death, from the nameless terror. And the way to escape death is to escape life. This the artist has always manifested through his creations. By living into his art he adopts for his world an intermediary realm in which he is all-powerful, a world which he dominates and rules. This intermediary realm of art, this world in which he moves as hero, was made realizable only out of the deepest sense of frustration. It arises paradoxically out of lack of power, out of a sense of inability to thwart fate.

This, then, is the Rainbow—the bridge which the artist throws over the yawning gulf of reality. The radiance of the rainbow, the promise it bespeaks, is the reflection of his belief in eternal life, his belief in perpetual spring, in continuous youth, virility, power. All his failures are but the reflection of his frail human encounters with inexorable reality. The mainspring is the dynamic impact of a will that leads to destruction. Because with each *realistic* failure he falls back with greater intensity on his creative illusions. His whole art is the pathetic and heroic effort to deny his human defeat. He works out, in his art, an unreal triumph—since it is neither a triumph over life nor over death. It is a triumph over an imaginary world which he himself has created. The drama lies entirely in the realm of idea. His war with reality is a reflection of the war within himself.

Just as the individual, when he arrives at maturity, evinces his maturity by the acceptance of responsibility, so the artist, when he recognizes his real nature, *his destined role*, is obliged to accept the responsibility of leadership.

He has invested himself with power and authority, and he must act accordingly. He can tolerate nothing but the dictates of his own conscience. Thus, in accepting his destiny, he accepts the responsibility of fathering his ideas. And just as the problems which each individual encounters are unique for him, and must be lived out, so the ideas which germinate in the artist are unique and must be lived out. He is the sign of Fate itself, the very symbol of destiny. For when, by living out his dream logic, he fulfills himself through the destruction of his own ego, he is incarnating for humanity the drama of individual life which, to be tasted and experienced, must embrace dissolution. In order to accomplish his purpose, however, the artist is obliged to retire, to withdraw from life, utilizing just enough of experience to present the flavor of the *real* struggle. If he chooses to *live* he defeats his own nature. He *must* live vicariously. Thus he is enabled to play the monstrous role of living and dying innumerable times, according to the measure of his capacity for life.

In each new work he re-enacts the spectacle of the sacrifice of the god. Because behind the idea of the sacrifice is the very substantial idea of the sacrament: the person incarnating the great power is killed, in order that his body may be consumed and the magic powers redistributed. The hatred for the god is the underlying motive of the worship of the god: it is based on the primitive desire to obtain the mysterious power of the man-god. In this sense, then, the artist is always crucified—in order to be consumed, in order to be divested of the mystery, in order to be robbed of his power and magic. The need of god is this hunger for a greater life: it is one and the same as the hunger for death.

We may image man forth as a sacred tree of life and death and if, further, we also think of this tree as representing not only the individual man, but a whole people, a whole Culture, we may begin to perceive the intimate connection between the emergence of the Dionysian type of artist and the notion of the sacred body.

Pursuing the image of man as tree of life and death, we may well conceive how the life instincts, goading man on to ever greater and greater expression through his world of form and symbol, his *ideology*, cause him at last to overlook the purely human, relative, fundamental aspects of his being— his animal nature, his very human body. Man rushes up the trunk of livingness to expand in a spiritual flowering. From an insignificant microcosm, but recently separated from the animal world, he eventually spreads himself over the heavens in the form of the great *anthropos*, the mythical man of the zodiac. The very process of differentiating himself from the animal world to which he still belongs causes him to lose sight more and more of his utter humanness. It is only at the last limits of creativeness, when his form world can assume no further architectural dimensions, that he suddenly begins to realize his “limitations.” It is then that fear assails him. It is then that he tastes death truly— a *foretaste*, as it were.

Now the life instincts are converted into death instincts. That which before had seemed all libido, endless urge to creation, is now seen to contain another principle—the embrace of the death instincts. Only at the full summit of creative expansion does he become truly *humanized*. Now he

feels the deep roots of his being, in the earth. Rooted. The supremacy and the glory and the magnificence of the body finally asserts itself in full vigor. Only now does the body assume its *sacred* character, its true role. The trinal division of body, mind and soul becomes a unity, a holy trinity. And with it the realization that one aspect of our nature cannot be exalted above another, except at the expense of one or the other.

What we call wisdom of life here attains its apogee—when this fundamental, rooted, sacred character of the body is divined. In the topmost branches of the tree of life thought withers. The grand spiritual efflorescence, by virtue of which man had raised himself to god-like proportions so that he lost touch with reality—because he himself *was* reality—this great spiritual flowering of Idea is now converted into an ignorance which expresses itself as the mystery of the Soma. Thought retraverses the religious trunk by which it had been supported and, digging into the very roots of being, rediscovers the enigma, the mystery of the body. Rediscovered the kinship between star, beast, ocean, man, flower, sky. Once again it is perceived that the trunk of the tree, the very column of life itself, is religious faith, the acceptance of one's tree-like nature—not a yearning for some other form of being. It is this acceptance of the laws of one's being which preserves the vital instincts of life, even in death. In the rush upward the “individual” aspect of one's being was the imperative, the only obsession. But at the summit, when the limits have been felt and perceived, there unfolds the grand perspective and one recognizes the similitude of surrounding beings, the inter-relationship of all forms and laws of being—the *organic* relatedness, the wholeness, the oneness of life.

And so the most creative type—the individual artist type—which had shot up highest and with the greatest variety of expression, so much so as to seem “divine,” this creative type of man must now, in order to preserve the very elements of creation in him, convert the doctrine, or the obsession of individuality, into a common, collective ideology. This is the real meaning of the Master-Exemplar, of the great religious figures who have dominated human life from the beginning. At their furthest peak of blossoming they have but emphasized their common humanity, their innate, rooted, inescapable humanness. Their isolation, in the heavens of thought, is what brings about their death.

When we look at an Olympian figure like Goethe we see a gigantic human tree that declared no “goal” except to unfold its proper being, no goal except to obey the deep organic laws of nature. That is wisdom, the wisdom of a ripe mind at the height of a great Culture. It is what Nietzsche described as the fusion in one being of two divergent streams—the Apollonian dreamer type and the ecstatic Dionysian. In Goethe we have the image of man incarnate, with head in the clouds and feet deeply rooted in the soil of race, culture, history. The past, represented by the historical, cultural soil; and the present, represented by the varying conditions of weather that compose his mental climate, *both the past and the present nourished him*. He was deeply religious without the necessity of worshipping a god. He had made himself a god. In this image of a Man there is no longer any question of conflict. He neither sacrifices himself to art, nor does he sacrifice art to life. Goethe’s work, which was a grand confession—“life’s traces,” he called it—is the

poetic expression of his wisdom, and it fell from him like ripe fruit from a tree. No station was too noble for his aspirations, no detail too insignificant for his attention. His life and work assumed grandiose proportions, an architectonic amplitude and majesty, for in both his life and his work there was the same organic foundation. He is the nearest, with the exception of da Vinci, to the god-man ideal of the Greeks. In him soil and climate were at their most favorable. He had blood, race, culture, time—*everything* with him. *Everything nourished him!*

At this lofty point when Goethe appears, when man and culture are both at peak, the whole of past and future spreads out. The end is now in sight, the road henceforth is downward. After the Olympian Goethe the Dionysian race of artists sets in, the men of the “tragic age” which Nietzsche prophesied and of which he himself was a superb example. The tragic age, when all that which is forever denied us makes itself felt with nostalgic force. Once again the cult of Mystery is revived. Once again man must re-enact the mystery of the god, the god whose fertilizing death is to redeem and to purify man from guilt and sin, to free him from the wheel of birth and becoming. Sin, guilt, neurosis—they are one and the same, the fruit of the tree of knowledge. The tree of life now becomes the tree of death. But it is always the same tree. And it is from this tree of death that life must spring forth again, that life must be reborn. Which, as all the myths of the tree testify, is precisely what happens. “At the moment of the destruction of the world,” says Jung, referring to Ygdrasil, the world-ash, “this tree becomes the guardian mother, the tree of death and life, one ‘pregnant.’ ”

It is at this point in the cultural cycle of history that the “transvaluation of all values” must set in. It is the reversal of the *spiritual* values, of a whole complex of reigning ideological values. The tree of life now knows its death. The Dionysian art of ecstasies now reasserts its claims. The drama intervenes.

The tragic reappears. Through madness and ecstasy the mystery of the god is enacted and the drunken revellers acquire the will to die—to *die creatively*. It is the conversion of that same life instinct which urged the tree of man to fullest expression. *It is to save man from the fear of death, so that he may be able to die!*

To go forward into death! Not backward into the womb. Out of the quick sands, out of the stagnant flux! This is the winter of life, and our drama is to secure a foothold so that life may go forward once again. But this foothold can only be gained on the dead bodies of those who are *willing* to die.

A Conversation with Gertrude Stein by John Preston

[This interview was done on the last afternoon of a six month working visit by writer and art collector Gertrude Stein to America in 1934-1935.]

[**New York**] She talks freely and volubly and sometimes obscurely, as if she had something there that she was very sure of and yet could not touch it. She has that air of having seen in flashes something which she does not know the shape of, and can talk about, not out of the flashes but out of the spaces between when she has waited. I do not mean that there is in her conversation any trace of that curious obscurity which dims so much of her prose, for me at least and I was frank (without wanting to be) in telling her that I could only guess sometimes at the written words. She seems peacefully resigned to the attacks that have been made upon her all her life and she has that air, so rare in writers, of living outside of both fame and criticism.

II

“ ... you will write/ she said, 'if you will write without thinking of the result in terms of a result, but think of the writing in terms of discovery, which is to say that creation must take place between the pen and the paper,

not before in a thought or afterwards in a recasting. Yes, before in a thought, but not in careful thinking. It will come if it is there and if you will let it

come, and if you have anything you will get a sudden creative recognition. You won't know how it was, even what it is, but it will be creation if it came out of the pen and out of you and not out of an architectural drawing of the thing you are doing. Technique is not so much a thing of form or style as the way that form or style came and how it can come again. Freeze your fountain and you will always have the frozen water shooting into the air and falling and it will be there to see oh, no doubt about that but there will be no more coming. I can tell how important it is to have that creative recognition. You cannot go into the womb to form the child; it is there and makes itself and comes forth whole and there it is and you have made it and have felt it, but it has come itself and that is creative recognition. Of course you have a little more control over your writing than that; you have to know what you want to get; but when you know that, let it take you and if it seems to take you off the track don't hold back, because that is perhaps where instinctively you want to be and if you hold back and try to be always where you have been before, you will go dry.

You think you have used up all the air where you are ... you said that you had used it up where you live, but that is not true, for if it were it would mean that you had given up all hope of change. I think writers *should* change their scenes; but the very fact that you do not know where you would go if you could means that you would take nothing truly to the place where you went and so there would be nothing there until you had found it, and when you did find it, it would be something you had brought and thought you had left behind. And that would be creative recognition, too, because it would have all to do with you and nothing really to do with the place.

But what if, when you tried to write, you felt stopped, suffocated, and no words came and if they came at all they were wooden and without meaning? What if you had the feeling you could never write another word?



Gertrude Stein and her portrait by Picasso (Manray 1922)

... the way to resume is to resume/ she said laughing. It is the only way. To resume. If you feel this book deeply it will come as deep as your feeling is when it is running truest and the book will never be truer or deeper than your feeling. But you do not yet know anything about your feeling because, though you may think it is all there, all crystallized, you have not let it run. So how can you know what it will be ? What will be best in it is what you really do not know now. If you knew it all it would not be creation but

dictation. No book is a book until it is done, and you cannot say that you are writing a book while you are just writing on sheets of paper and all that is in you has not yet come out. And a book ... let it go on endlessly is not the whole man. There is no such thing as a *one book* author.

I remember a young man in Paris just after the war you have never heard of this young man and we all liked his first book very much and he liked it too, and one day he said to me, "This book will make literary history," and I told him : "It will make some part of literary history, perhaps, but only if you go on making a new part every day and grow with the history you are making until you become a part of it yourself.** But this young man never wrote another book and now he sits in Paris and searches sadly for the mention of his name in indexes.

III

Her secretary came in and out of the room, putting things away in a trunk that stood open at the end of the couch (they sail to-morrow noon), exchanging a few words in a voice that was new for its softness; and suddenly out of something that we were saying about America came the discovery that both she and I were from Seattle and that she had known my father when he was a young man and before he went into the Klondike. And then as her secretary spoke a strange deep kinship of land seemed to take possession of the other woman, who had been born in Pennsylvania and raised in Oakland, California, and had been in far-off Paris for thirty years

without sight of her native earth, for she began to speak with deep-felt fervor of her American experience in the past six months.

... you were saying that you had torn up roots ten years ago and tried to plant them again in New England where there was none of your blood, and that now you have a feeling of being without roots. Something like that happened to me, too. I think I must have had a feeling that it had happened or I should not have come back. I went to California. I saw it and felt it and had a tenderness and a horror too. Roots are so small and dry when you have them and they are exposed to you. You have seen them on a plant and sometimes they seem to deny the plant if it is vigorous.'

She paused when I lit a cigarette; I could not make out whether she had been alarmed at my smoking so much or whether she was instinctively silent in the face of any physical activity on the part of her listener.

Well ... she went on, 'we're not like that really. Our roots can be anywhere and we can survive, because if you think about it, we take our roots with us. I always knew that a little and now I know it wholly. I know because you can go back to where they are and they can be less real to you than they were three thousand, six thousand miles away. Don't worry about your roots so long as you worry about them. The essential thing is to have the feeling that they exist, that they are somewhere. They will take care of themselves, and they will take care of you too, though you may never know how it has happened. To think only of going back for them is to confess that the plant is dying.

Yes ... [I said] ... there is something more. There is the hunger for the land, for the speech.

*I know... she said sadly ... America is wonderful!' Then without any warning she declared : "I feel now that it is my business here. After all, it is my business, this America!' And she laughed with a marvelous heartiness, a real lust. When I asked her if she would come back she looked up slyly and was smiling still and she opened and shut her eyes with the same zestful expression with which a man smacks his lips.

'Well ... [I said] ... 'you have had a long time to look. What is it that happens to American writers?'

'What is it you notice?'

'It is obvious. They look gigantic at first. Then they get to be thirty-five or forty and the juices dry up and there they are. Something goes out of them and they begin to repeat according to formula. Or else they grow silent altogether.'

'The trouble is a simple one,' she said. 'They become writers. They cease being creative men and soon they find that they are novelists or critics or poets or biographers, and they are encouraged to be one of those things because they have been very good in one performance or two or three, but

that is silly. When a man says, "I am a novelist," he is simply a literary shoemaker. If Mr. Robert Frost is at all good as a poet, it is because he is a farmer really in his mind a farmer, I mean. And there is another whom you young men are doing your best and very really your worst to forget, and he is the editor of a small-town newspaper and his name is Sherwood Anderson. Now Sherwood* he was the only man she called by his first name, and then affectionately 'Sherwood is really and truly great because he truly does not care what he is and has not thought what he is except a man, a man who can go away and be small in the world's eyes and yet perhaps be one of the very few Americans who have achieved that perfect freshness of creation and passion, as simple as rain falling on a page, and rain that fell from him and was there miraculously and was all his, You see, he had that creative recognition, that wonderful ability to have it all on paper before he saw it and then to be strengthened by what he saw so that he could always go deep for more and not know that he was going. Scott Fitzgerald, you know, had it for a little while, but not any more. He is an American Novelist.

'What about Hemingway?' [*I could not resist asking her that question*] Her name and the name of Ernest Hemingway are almost inseparable when one thinks of the Paris after the war, of the expatriates who gathered around her there as a sibyl. 'He was good until after A Farewell to Arms!'

'No,' she said, 'he was not really good after 1925. In his early short stories he had what I have been trying to describe to you. Then Hemingway did not lose it; he threw it away.'

I told him then: "Hemingway, you have a small income; you will not starve; you can work without worry and you can grow and keep this thing and it will grow with you." But he did not wish to grow that way; he wished to grow violently. Now ... here is a curious thing. Hemingway is not an American Novelist. He has not sold himself and he has not settled into any literary mould. Maybe his own mould, but that's not only literary. When I first met Hemingway he had a truly sensitive capacity for emotion, and that was the stuff of the first stories; but he was shy of himself and he began to develop, as a shield ... *a big Kansas City brutality about it* ... and so he was "tough" because he was really sensitive and ashamed that he was. Then it happened. I saw it happening and tried to save what was fine there, but it was too late. He went the way so many other Americans have gone before, the way they are still going. He became obsessed by sex and violent death.

She held up a stubby forefinger. 'Now you will mistake me. Sex and death are the springs of the most valid of human emotions. But they are not all; they are not even all emotion. But for Hemingway everything became multiplied by and subtracted from sex and death. But I knew at the start and I know better now that it wasn't just to find out what these things were; it was the disguise for the thing that was really gentle and fine in him, and then his agonizing shyness escaped into brutality. No, now wait not real brutality, because the truly brutal man wants something more than bullfighting and deep-sea fishing and elephant killing or whatever it is now, and perhaps if Hemingway were truly brutal he could make a real literature out of those things; but he is not, and I doubt if he will ever again write truly about anything. He is skillful, yes, but that is the writer; the other half is the man.'

[I asked her] 'Do you really think American writers are obsessed by sex? And if they are, isn't it legitimate?'

'It is legitimate, of course. Literature creative literature unconcerned with sex is inconceivable. But not literary sex, because sex is a part of something of which the other parts are not sex at all. No ... it is really a matter of tone. You can tell, if you can tell anything, by the way a man talks about sex whether he is impotent or not, and if he talks about nothing else you can be quite sure that he is impotent physically and as an artist too.

One thing which I have tried to tell Americans,' she went on, is that there can be no truly great creation without passion, but I'm not sure that I have been able to tell them at all. If they have not understood it is because they have had to think of sex first, and they can think of sex as passion more easily than they can think of passion as the whole force of man. Always they try to label it, and that is a mistake. What do I mean ? I will tell you. I think of Byron. Now Byron had passion. It had nothing to do with his women.

It was a quality of Byron's mind and everything he wrote came out of it, and perhaps that is why his work is so uneven, because a man's passion is uneven if it is real; and sometimes, if he can write it, it is only passion and has no meaning outside of itself. Swinburne wrote all his life about passion, but you can read all of him and you will not know what passions he had. I am not sure that it is necessary to know or that Swinburne would have been better if he had known. A man's passion can be wonderful when it has an

object which may be a woman or an idea or wrath at an injustice, but after it happens, as it usually does, that the object is lost or won after a time, the passion does not survive it. It survives only if it was there before, only if the woman or the idea or the wrath was an incident in the passion and not the cause of it and that is what makes the writer.

'Often the men who really have it are not able to recognize it in themselves because they do not know what it is to feel differently or not to feel at all. And it won't answer to its name. Probably Goethe thought that *Young Werther* was a more passionate book than *Wilhelm Meister*, but in *Werther* he was only describing passion and in *Wilhelrn Meister* he was transferring it. And I don't think he knew what he had done. He did not have to. Emerson might have been surprised if he had been told that he was passionate. But Emerson really had passion; he wrote it; but he could not have written *about it* because he did not know about it.

Now Hemingway knows all about it and can sometimes write very surely about it, but he hasn't any at all. Not really any. He merely has passions. And Faulkner and Caldwell and all that I have read in America and before I came. They are good craftsmen and they are honest men, but they do not have it.'

IV

I have never heard talk come more naturally and casually. It had none of the tautness or deadly care that is in the speech of most American intellectuals

when they talk from the mind out. If sometime you will listen to workingmen talking when they are concentrated upon the physical job at hand, and one of them will go on without cease while he is sawing and measuring and nailing, not always audible, but keeping on in an easy rhythm and almost without awareness of words then you will get some idea of her conversation.

Well, I think Thomas Wolfe has it, [I said].

I think he really has it more than any man I know in America. I had just read *Of Time and the River* and had been deeply moved.

'I read his first book,' she said, misnaming it. 'And I looked for it, but I did not find it. Wolfe is a deluge and you are flooded by him, but if you want to read carefully ... you must learn to know how you are flooded. In a review I read on the train Wolfe was many things and among them he was Niagara. Now that is not so silly as it sounds. Niagara has power and it has form and it is beautiful for thirty seconds, but the water at the bottom that has been Niagara is no better and no different from the water at the top that will be Niagara. Something wonderful and terrible has happened to it, but it is the same water and nothing at all would have happened if it had not been for an aberration in one of nature's forms. The river is the water's true form and it is a very satisfactory form for the water and Niagara is altogether wrong. Wolfe's books are the water at the bottom and they foam magnificently because they have come the wrong way, but they are no better than when

they started. Niagara exists because the true form ran out and the water could find no other way. But the creative artist should be more adroit.

[Astonished I asked her] 'Do you mean that you think the novel form has run out?'

'Truly yes. And when a form is dead it always happens that everything that is written in it is really formless. And you know it is dead when it has crystallized and everything that goes into it must be made a certain way. What is bad In Wolfe is made that way and what is good is made very differently and so if you take what is good, he really has not written a novel at all.'

Yes but what difference does it make?' I asked her. 'It was something that was very true for me, and perhaps I didn't care whether it was a novel or not.

... Gertrude said to me, 'you must try to understand me. I was not impatient because it was not a novel but because Wolfe did not see what it might have been and if he really and truly had the passion you say he has, he would have seen because he would have really and truly felt it, and it would have taken its own form, and with his wonderful energy it would not have defeated him.'

'What has passion got to do with choosing an art form? [I asked her].

'Everything. There is nothing else that determines form. What Wolfe is writing is his autobiography, but he has chosen to tell it as a story and an autobiography is never a story because life does not take place in events. What he has really done is to release himself, and so he has only told the truth of his release and not the truth of discovery. And that is why he means so much to you young men, because it is your release too. And perhaps because it is so long and unselective it is better for you, for if it stays with you, you will give it your own form and, if you have any passion, that too, and then perhaps you will be able to make the discovery he did not make. But you will not read it again because you will not need it again. And if a book has been a very true book for you? you will always need it again.'

Her secretary came into the room, looked at her watch, and said: 'You have twenty-five minutes for your walk. You must be back at ten minutes to one.'

[I stood up, suddenly conscious that, having asked for fifteen minutes out of her last day in America, I had stayed over an hour utterly unaware of time. I made to go.]

'No,' she said abruptly, 'there is still more to say. Walk with me because I want to say it.'

[We walked out of the hotel together.]

'Walk on my left,' she said, 'because my right ear is broken.' She walked very sturdily, almost rapidly, and shouted above the traffic.

'There are two particular things I want to tell you because I have thought about them in America. I have thought about them for many years, but particularly in America I have seen them in a new light. So much has happened since I left. Americans are really beginning to use their heads more now than at any time since the Civil War. They used them then because they had to and thinking was in the air, and they have to use them now or be destroyed. When you write the Civil War you must think of it in terms of then and now and not the time between. Well, Americans have not gone far yet, perhaps, but they have started thinking again and there are heads here and something is ahead. It has no real shape, but I feel it and I do not feel it so much abroad and that is why my business is here. You see, there is something for writers that there was not before. You are too close to it and you only vaguely sense it. That is why you let your economic problem bother you. If you see and feel you will know what your work is, and if you do it well the economic problem takes care of itself. Don't think so much about your wife and child being dependent upon your work. Try to think of your work being dependent upon your wife and child, for it will be if it really comes from you, and if it doesn't come from you the you that has the wife and child and this Fifth Avenue and these people then it is no use anyway and your economic problem will have nothing to do with writing because you will not be a writer at all. I find you young writers worrying about losing your integrity and it is well that you should, but a man who really loses his integrity does not know that it is gone, and nobody can wrest it from you if you really have it. An ideal is good only if it moves you forward and can make you produce ... but it is no good if you prefer to

produce nothing rather than write sometimes for money alone, because the ideal defeats itself when the economic problem you have been talking about defeats you'

[We were crossing streets and the crowds were looking curiously at this bronze-faced woman whose picture had been so often in the papers, but she was unaware of them, it seemed to me, but extraordinarily aware of the movement around her and especially of taxicabs. After all, I reflected, she had lived in Paris.]

'The thing for the serious writer to remember,' she said, 'is that he is writing seriously and is not a salesman. If the writer and the salesman are born in the same man it is lucky for both of them, but if they are not, one is sure to kill the other when you force them together. And there is one thing more.'

[We turned off Madison Avenue and headed back to the hotel.]

A very important thing and I know it because I have seen it kill so many writers is not to make up your mind that you are any one thing. Look at your own case. You have written, first a biography, then a history of the American Revolution, and third a modern novel. But how absurd it would be if you should make up your mind that you are a Biographer, a Historian, or a Novelist! She pronounced the words in tremendous capitals. 'The truth is probably that all those forms are dead because they have become forms, and you must have felt that or you would not have moved on from one to another. Well, you will go on and you will work in them, and sometime, if

your work has any meaning and I am not sure that anything but a lifework has meaning, then you may discover a new form. Somebody has said that I myself am striving for a fourth dimension in literature. I am striving for nothing of the sort and I am not striving at all but only gradually growing and becoming steadily more aware of the ways things can be felt and known in words, and perhaps if I feel them and know them myself in the new ways it is enough, and if I know fully enough there will be a note of sureness and confidence that will make others know too.

'And when one has discovered and evolved a new form, it is not the form but the fact that you are the -form that is important. That is why Boswell is the greatest biographer that ever lived, because he was no slavish Eckermann with the perfect faithfulness of notes which are not faithful at all but because he put into Johnson's mouth words that Johnson probably never uttered, and yet you know when you read it that that is what Johnson would have said under such and such a circumstance and you know all that because Boswell discovered Johnson's real form which Johnson never knew. The great thing is not ever to think about form but let it come. Does that sound strange from me? They have accused me of thinking of nothing else. Do you see the real joke ? It is the critics who have really thought about form always and I have thought about writing!'

Gertrude Stein laughed enormously and went into the hotel with the crowd.

[This interview was published in *Atlantic Monthly* in 1935]

The Wardrobe by Thomas Mann (1899)

It was cloudy, cool, and half-dark when the Berlin-Rome express drew in at a middle-sized station on its way. Albrecht van der Qualen, solitary traveller in a first-class compartment with lace covers over the plush upholstery, roused himself and sat up. He felt a flat taste in his mouth, and in his body the none-too-agreeable sensations produced when the train comes to a stop after a long journey and we are aware of the cessation of rhythmic motion and conscious of calls and signals from without. It is like coming to oneself out of drunkenness or lethargy. Our nerves, suddenly deprived of the supporting rhythm, feel bewildered and forlorn. And this the more if we have just roused out of the heavy sleep one falls into in a train.

Albrecht van der Qualen stretched a little, moved to the window, and let down the pane. He looked along the train. Men were busy at the mail van, unloading and loading parcels. The engine gave out a series of sounds, it snorted and rumbled a bit, standing still, but only as a horse stands still, lifting its hoof, twitching its ears, and awaiting impatiently the signal to go on.

A tall, stout woman in a long raincoat, with a face expressive of nothing but worry, was dragging a hundred-pound suitcase along the train, propelling it before her with pushes from one knee. She was saying nothing, but looking heated and distressed. Her upper lip stuck out, with little beads of sweat upon it – altogether she was a pathetic figure. “You poor dear thing,” van der Qualen thought. “If I could help you, soothe you, take you in – only for

the sake of that upper lip. But each for himself, so things are arranged in life; and I stand here at this moment perfectly carefree, looking at you as I might at a beetle that has fallen on its back."

It was half-dark in the station shed. Dawn or twilight – he did not know. He had slept, who could say whether for two, five, or twelve hours? He had sometimes slept for twenty-four, or even more, unbrokenly, an extraordinarily profound sleep. He wore a half-length dark-brown winter overcoat with a velvet collar. From his features it was hard to judge his age: one might actually hesitate between twenty-five and the end of the thirties. He had a yellowish skin, but his eyes were black like live coals and had deep shadows round them. These eyes boded nothing good. Several doctors, speaking frankly as man to man, had not given him many more months. - His dark hair was smoothly parted on one side.

In Berlin - although Berlin had not been the beginning of his journey – he had climbed into the train just as it was moving off – incidentally with his red leather hand-bag. He had gone to sleep and now at waking felt himself so completely absolved from time that a sense of refreshment streamed through him. He rejoiced in the knowledge that at the end of the thin gold chain he wore round his neck there was only a little medallion in his waist-coat pocket. He did not like to be aware of the hour or of the day of the week, and moreover he had no truck with the calendars. Some time ago he had lost the habit of knowing the day of the month or even the month of the year. Everything must be in the air - so he put it in his mind, and the phrase was comprehensive though rather vague. He was seldom or never disturbed

in this programme, as he took pains to keep all upsetting knowledge at a distance from him. After all, was it not enough for him to know more or less what season it was? "It is more or less autumn," he thought, gazing out into the damp and gloomy train shed. "More I do not know. Do I even know where I am?"

His satisfaction at this thought amounted to a thrill of pleasure. No, he did not know where he was! Was he still in Germany! Beyond a doubt in North Germany? That remained to be seen. While his eyes were still heavy with sleep the window of his compartment had glided past an illuminated sign; it probably had the name of the station on it, but not the picture of a single letter had been transmitted to his brain. In still dazed condition he had heard the conductor call the name two or three times, but not a syllable had he grasped. But out there in a twilight of which he knew not so much as whether it was morning or evening lay a strange place, an unknown town.

Albrecht van der Qualen took his felt hat out of the rack, seized his red leather hand-bag, the strap of which secured a red and white silk and wool plaid into which was rolled an umbrella with a silver crook – and although his ticket was labelled Florence, he left the compartment and the train, walked along the shed, deposited his luggage at the cloak-room, lighted a cigar, thrust his hands – he carried neither stick nor umbrella - into his overcoat pockets, and left the station.

Outside in the damp, gloomy, and nearly empty square five or six hackney coachmen were snapping their whips, and a man with braided cap and long

cloak in which he huddled shivering inquired politely: "*Hotel zum braven Mann?*" Van der Qualen thanked him politely and held on his way. The people whom he met had their coat-collars turned up; he put his up too, nestled his chin into the velvet, smoked, and went his way, not slowly and not too fast.

He passed along a low wall and an old gate with two massive towers; he crossed a bridge with statues on the railings and saw the water rolling slow and turbid below. A long wooden boat, ancient and crumbling, came by, sculled by a man with a long pole in the stern. Van der Qualen stood for a while leaning over the rail of the bridge. "Here," he said to himself, "is a river; here is the river. It is nice to think that I call it that because I do not know its name." Then he went on.

He walked straight on for a little, on the pavement of a street which was neither very narrow nor very broad; then he turned off to the left. It was evening. The electric arc-lights came on, flickered, glowed, sputtered, and then illuminated the gloom. The shops were closing. "So we may say that it is in every respect autumn," thought van der Qualen, proceeding along the wet black pavement. He wore no galoshes, but his boots were very thick-soled, durable, and firm,-and withal not lacking in elegance.

He held to the left. Men moved past him, they hurried on their business or coming from it. "And I move with them," he thought, "and am as alone and as strange as probably no man has ever been before. I have no business and no goal. I have not even a stick to lean upon. More remote, freer, more

detached, no one can be, I owe nothing to anybody, nobody owes anything to me. God has never held out His hand over me, He knows me not at all. Honest unhappiness without charity is a good thing; a man can say to himself: I owe God nothing."

He soon came to the edge of the town. Probably he had slanted across it at about the middle. He found himself on a broad sub-urban street with trees and villas, turned to his right, passed three or four cross-streets almost like village lanes, lighted only by lanterns, and came to a stop in a somewhat wider one before a wooden door next to a commonplace house painted a dingy yellow, which had nevertheless the striking feature of very convex and quite opaque plate-glass windows. But on the door was a sign: "In this house on the third floor there are rooms to let." " Ah!" he remarked; tossed away the end of his cigar, passed through the door along a boarding which formed the dividing line between two properties, and then turned left through the door of the house itself. A shabby grey runner ran across the entry. He covered it in two steps and began to mount the simple wooden stair.

The doors to the several apartments were very modest too; they had white glass panes with woven wire over them and on some of them were name-plates. The landings were lighted by oil lamps. On the third storey, the top one, for the attic came next, were entrances right and left, simple brown doors without name-plates. Van der Qualen pulled the brass bell in the middle. It rang, but there was no sign from within. He knocked left. No

answer. He knocked right. He heard light steps within, very long, like strides, and the door opened.

A woman stood there, a lady, tall, lean, and old. She wore a cap with a large pale-lilac bow, and an old-fashioned, faded black gown. She had a sunken birdlike face and on her brow there was an eruption, a sort of fungus growth. It was rather repulsive.

" Good evening," said van der Qualen. " The rooms? "

The old lady nodded, she nodded and smiled slowly, without a word, understandingly, and with her beautiful long white hand made a slow, languid, and elegant gesture towards the next, the left-hand door. Then she retired and appeared again with a key. " Look," he thought, standing behind her as she unlocked the door; "you are like some kind of banshee, a figure out of Hoffmann, madam" She took the oil lamp from its hook and ushered him in.

It was a small, low-ceiled room with a brown floor. Its walls were covered with straw-coloured matting. There was a window at the back in the right-hand wall, shrouded in long, thin white muslin folds. A white door also on the right led into the next room. This room was pathetically bare, with staring white walls, against which three straw chairs, painted pink, stood out like strawberries from whipped cream. A wardrobe, a washing-stand with a mirror ... The bed, a mammoth mahogany piece, stood free in the middle of the room.

" Have you any objections! " asked the old woman, and passed her lovely long, white hand lightly over the fungus growth on her forehead. - It was as though she had said that by accident because she could not think for the moment of a more ordinary phrase. For she added at once: " – so to speak?"

"No, I have no objections," said van der Qualen. "The rooms are rather cleverly furnished. I will take them. I'd like to have somebody fetch my luggage from the station, here is the ticket. You will be kind enough to make up the bed and give me some water. I'll take the house key now, and the key to the apartment. I'd like a couple of towels. I'll wash up and go into the city for supper and come back later."

He drew a nickel case out of his pocket, took out some soap, and began to wash his face and hands, looking as he did so through the convex window-panes far down over the muddy, gas-lit sub-urban streets, over the arc-lights and the villas. - As he dried his hands he went over to the wardrobe. It was a square one, varnished brown, rather shaky, with a simple curved top. It stood in the centre of the right-hand wall exactly in the niche of a second white door, which of course led into the rooms to which the main and middle door on the landing gave access. "Here is something in the world that is well arranged," thought van der Qualen. "This wardrobe fits into the door niche as though it were made for it."

He opened the wardrobe door. It was entirely empty, with several rows of hooks in the ceiling; but it proved to have no back, being closed behind by a

piece of rough common grey burlap, fastened by nails or tacks at the four corners.

Van der Qualen closed the wardrobe door, took his hat, turned up the collar of his coat once more, Put out the candle, and set forth. As he went through the front room he thought to hear mingled with the sound of his own steps a sort of ringing in the other room: a soft, clear, metallic sound – but perhaps he was mistaken. As though a gold ring were to fall into a silver basin, he thought, as he locked the outer door. He went down the steps and out of the gate and took the way to the town.

In a busy street he entered a lighted restaurant and sat down at one of the front tables, turning his back to all the world. He ate a *soupe aux fines herbes* with croutons, a steak with a poached egg, a compote and wine, a small piece of green gorgonzola and half a pear. While he paid and put on his coat he took a few puffs from a Russian cigarette. then lighted a cigar and went out. He strolled for a while, found his homeward route into the suburb, and went leisurely back.

The house with the plate-glass windows lay quite dark and silent when van der Qualen opened the house door and mounted the dim stair. He lighted himself with matches as he went and opened the left-hand brown door in the third storey. He laid hat and overcoat on the divan, lighted the lamp on the big writing-table, and found there his hand-bag as well as the plaid and umbrella. He unrolled the plaid and got a bottle of cognac, then a little glass and took a sip now and then as he sat in the arm-chair finishing his cigar.

"How fortunate, after all," thought he," that there is cognac in the world." Then he went into the bedroom, where he lighted the candle on the night-table, Put out the light in the other room, and began to undress.

Piece by piece he put down his good, unobtrusive grey suit on the red chair beside the bed; but then as he loosened his braces he remembered his hat and overcoat, which still lay on the couch. He fetched them into the bedroom and opened the wardrobe ... He took a step backwards and reached behind him to clutch one of the large dark-red mahogany balls which ornamented the bedposts. The room, with its four white walls, from which the three pink chairs stood out like strawberries from whipped cream, lay in the unstable light of the candle.

But the wardrobe over there was open and, it was not empty. Somebody was standing in it, a creature so lovely that Albrecht van der Qualen's heart stood still a moment and then in long, deep, quiet throbs resumed its beating- She was quite nude and one of her slender arms reached up to crook a forefinger round one of the hooks in the ceiling of the wardrobe. Long waves of brown hair rested on the childlike shoulders – they breathed that charm to which the only answer is a sob.

The candlelight was mirrored in her narrow black eyes. Her mouth was a little large, but it had an expression as sweet as the lips of sleep when after long days of pain they kiss our brow. Her ankles nestled and her slender limbs clung to one another.

Albrecht van der Qualen rubbed one hand over his eyes and stared and he saw that down in the right corner the sacking was loosened from the back of the wardrobe. "What – " said he ... "won't you come in – or how should I put it–out? Have a little glass of cognac? Half a glass? "But he expected no answer to this -and he got none. Her narrow, shining eyes, so very black that they seemed bottomless and inexpressive – they were directed upon him, but aimlessly and somewhat blurred, as though they did not see him.

“Shall I tell you a story?" she said suddenly in a low, husky voice.

"Tell me a story," he answered' He had sunk down in- a sitting posture on the edge of the bed, his overcoat lay across his knees with his folded hands resting upon it. His mouth stood a little open, his eyes half-closed. But the blood pulsed warm and mildly through his body and there was a gentle singing in his ears.

She had let herself down in the cupboard and embraced a drawn-up knee with her slender arms, while the other leg stretched out before her. Her little breasts were pressed together by her upper arm, and the light gleamed on the skin of her flexed knee. She talked ... talked in a soft voice, while the candle-flame performed its noiseless dance.

Two walked on the heath and her head lay on his shoulder. There was a perfume from all growing things, but the evening mist already rose from the ground. So it began. And often it was in verse, rhyming in that incomparably sweet and flowing way that comes to us now and again in the half-slumber

of fever. But it ended badly; a sad ending: the two holding each other indissolubly embraced, and while their lips rest on each other, one stabbing the other above the waist with a broad knife – and not without good cause. So it ended. And then she stood up with an infinitely sweet and modest gesture, lifted the grey sacking at the right-hand corner – and was no more there.

From now on he found her every evening in his wardrobe and listened to her stories – how many evenings? How many days, weeks, or months did he remain in this house and in this city? It would profit nobody to know. Who would care for a miserable statistic! And we are aware that Albrecht van der Qualen had been told by several physicians that he had but a few months to live. She told him stories.

They were sad stories, without relief; but they rested like a sweet burden upon the heart and made it beat longer and more blissfully. Often he forgot himself – His blood swelled up in him, he stretched out his hands to her, and she did not resist him. But then for several evenings he did not find her in the wardrobe, and when she came back she did not tell him anything for several evenings and then by degrees resumed, until he again forgot himself.

How long it lasted – who knows? Who even knows whether Albrecht van der Qualen actually awoke on that grey afternoon and went into the unknown city; whether he did nor remain asleep in his first-class carriage and let the Berlin-Rome express bear him swiftly over the mountains?

Would any of us care to take the responsibility of giving a definite answer?
It is all uncertain.

"Everything must be in the air "

The Big Lie About Beautiful Women by Louie Bolinger

The greatest fraud perpetrated on malekind started the day the first cave woman put a pat of red clay onto her cheeks and undulated past a loitering cave man. He quickly hoisted his club and pursued her. Since then, man's loftiest desire has been to be loved, to possess, marry and own a beautiful woman. Through the march of centuries this desire has endured—this bright fraud called “beauty” still blinds men.

What really is beauty? Beauty is ... a big lie.

Judging by today's beauty standards, Cleopatra could never have gotten a screen-test. She was large, over-weight, and her face was not unlike a dented pillow. But she conquered Caesar, the greatest Roman general—and reduced another Roman warrior, Marc Antony, to a quivering puppy grateful for any of her favors.

If a pretty face or a seductive figure were the only standard for beauty, then the marital rate would have been almost zero, long before man invented the game of statistics.

Queen Nefertiti of ancient Egypt was considered a raving beauty. She painted herself in vivid greens and bright reds and garish purples and dressed in skin-tight, almost transparent clothes. She was a slender, sylph-like woman who (if her attire allowed movement) would have slinked along

the palace corridors like a shining minx trying to attract a lusty lion. But such a raving beauty would today be judged a raving lunatic.

In the 17th Century, the era of that great artist, Rubens, a female with the painfully thin proportions of Lauren Bacall or Debbie Reynolds would have been ignored for having too little curve and too much bone. Beauties of the 17th Century were women with abundant bosoms and full-blown hips. Today we'd refer to them as hippos.

The criteria for judging women as beautiful are as ever-changing as the position of the clouds. A British critic, Hancock, said, "A woman uncomely in face but golden in voice can win me." Anatole France, a connoisseur of French women, stated: "We have medicines to make women speak; we have none to make them keep silent."

What one man falls for—another man runs from.

In the colonial days of America there was no accurate way of appraising the full beauty of a woman. They were so corseted and smothered under heaps of clothing that the phrase "rugged pioneer women" probably arose from the fact that they needed to be "mighty of muscle" to tote the heaps of clothing they wore. And there was that tantalizing bustle—that deceptive bit of clothly fluff that hornswoggled many a frontiersman into believing he had snared a prize —only to learn that he had been hustled by a bustle.

The belles deemed most beautiful in the Sarasdjinges tribes of Africa are the damsels with the most elongated lips—lips that when fully developed are like walrus flaps. In Padaung, Burma, a female's beauty is appraised by the length of her neck. They stretch their necks by using brass rings, gradually adding rings until they seem like miniature giraffes. Women in the Sesere tribe are highly-prized and desperately desirable if their eyes are crossed. In North Africa the more obese the maid, the larger the following of eager swains.

Beauty expert Vincent Trotta has, from his vast experience with beauty contests, devised a set of rules for determining contest winners: “An imaginary line through the center of the head must pass through the center of the neck and torso, dividing the legs. The projection of this line must pass through the center of the body and between the two heels. The shoulders must be wider than the hip and slope at a 20 degree angle from the neck to the tip of the shoulders. The neck must be graceful and full enough to act as a pedestal to the head.

“The arms must flow along the sides and act as a frame to the body. The legs must fuse at the hips, knees, calves, the heels to join together with little space shown separating the legs. The head should be the crowning glory of the body, the hair-do serving as a frame for the head. No hard edges or lines should separate the face from the hair.

“The lines of the arms should be full but graceful. The fingers slender, neither bony or pudgy, nails well-groomed. According to the height of the

girl, bosom should be well-proportioned and NOT accentuated. The back should be well-proportioned, flat and with no lateral curvature.”

Is this one in fifty thousand anatomical miracle really the source of a woman’s true beauty? What about the strange and mystifying depths sheltered in her heart and mind and soul? And after all, without a man around, a woman is just a female.

However, H. L. Mencken, an expert on almost all aspects of civilization, including WOMEN, has expressed his opinion about the structure of the female.

“The female body, even at its best, is very defective in form; it has harsh curves and very clumsily distributed masses; compared to it the average milk-jug, or even cuspidor, is a thing of intelligent and gratifying design . . . Below the neck by the bow and below the waist astern there are two masses that simply refuse to fit into a balanced composition. Viewed from the side, a woman presents an exaggerated S bisected by an imperfect straight line, and so she inevitably suggests a drunken dollar-mark.”

In contradiction to this thinking, Rodgers and Hammerstein wrote the eminently popular song, “There Is Nothing Like a Dame.” When the experts disagree, how can the average male know what he considers beauty as it is obvious that face and form do not total up to “total” beauty? And therein lies the big lie.

There are no specific factors upon which to hang the label “beauty”— there are only personal combinations which, when brought together, create the illusion of beauty.

The outstanding women of history were not the luscious Marilyn Monroes or the angelic Audrey Hepburns or the flashing-eyed, tempestuous tempered Rita Hay worths. The women who reduced kings to jelly and ruled the rulers of nations were women with vigorous, complex, exciting PERSONALITIES.

Salome was only thirteen years old when she danced and entranced the moguls of the world. Josephine had too many chins and a long pointed nose but her brilliance of mind and grandness of manner snared elusive Napoleon. Queen Elizabeth was bald, wrinkled and dumpy but she captured the love of the handsomest man of the day, Lord Essex. And the greatest woman of them all—the woman whose face could launch a thousand ships and whose kiss could make a man feel immortal—was beyond description and known only as Helen of Troy. Would she have launched only 500 ships if she had been pigeon-toed? Absolutely!

Our jet-age culture has contributed to the big beauty lie. Lands that were once too remote to reach are now within quick flying distance and the simple qualities that might have determined a woman’s beauty have now become a phantasmagoric mixture of racial blends.

Some men prefer the cultivated, aristocratic Frenchwoman; others choose the dark-eyed Italian type; some select the Moroccan belly-dancer while another level of masculine taste favors the fiery Yugoslavian damsel. Many males are interested in the German house-frau while some are stirred by the peppery senorita and others are hypnotized by the veiled harem girl or the lusty Russian woman or the ivory-skinned, blonde haired Scandinavian. There are even those men who take to the American female typified (or deified) by the chic business woman in tailored attire or the doll in tight fitting dungarees.

But number them one after the other or put them all together and they still don't spell B-E-A-U-T-Y. Since beauty per se is such an intangible, elusive quality, the only clear way of indicating what beauty might be, is by describing the times when a woman is NOT beautiful.

Example: A woman will not ever be considered beautiful if, while casually chewing gum, she starts popping bubbles—or if, in a moment of loving tenderness she begins cracking her knuckles. A man of taste and breeding will never say, “She is so beautiful” about the, woman who hides her true face behind a make-up mask—or the woman who giggles before being kissed or whose mouth twists and wrinkles or whose voice is shrill when cooing sweet nothings. And no matter how grand or dramatic is a woman's manner, her flair and poise will vanish if during a luxurious dinner party she begins noisily picking her teeth.

Beauty is only skin deep. Her face may be arranged like a landslide of features and she may be built like a lumpy balloon—but if she can cultivate a vibrant personality and a perfect sense of timing—then she will always be considered a rare beauty.

To be what the man wants her to be exactly when he wants her to be it is the first attribute of a beautiful woman. Too many women are like the gorgeous doll who visited her boy friend in prison and gaped dumbly when he asked, “Did you bring the stuff?” She replied, “Not exactly, honey. I got the saw and the eggs and the flour and lard, but how in hell do you bake a cake?”

Another vital attribute of feminine allure is the capacity to inspire or enthuse a male and avoid conversations like the one overheard at a bar during the cocktail hour.

“Darling, do you adore the glow and texture of my hair, is it like newly spun silk?”

“Uh-huh.”

“Are my eyes limpid pools of desire, my lips kissable as rose petals, my nose aristocratic, my ear lobes-drops of delight?”

“Yep.”

“Does the scent of me intoxicate you, the touch of me thrill you, the sight of me send shivers through your soul?”

“Sure, dear.”

“Ooooh, darling, you say the nicest things.”

Fashion is another element necessary to the beautiful woman. But while most men enjoy escorting a well-groomed, well-dressed woman, they dislike a woman who is stylish to the point of being ridiculous—as ridiculous as the woman who related her latest dream to her psychiatrist. “I was walking down the street with nothing on but a hat” The psychiatrist asked, “Did you feel embarrassed?” The woman gushed, “Terribly embarrassed, doctor. It was last year’s hat.”

To be considered a beautiful woman, a woman must be sensitive to the man’s longings. Comfort him in his time of despair, be effervescent with enthusiasm as he pursues his ambitions, patient with his temper-tantrums, a laughing-girl when participating in his fun-loving nature— responsive to his intelligence and appreciative to his wisdom and kindly toward his little-boyishness—fashionable and proper when taken to his places of entertainment, indulgent when he is neglectful, overjoyed when he remembers your birthday, conservative when with company but abandoned when alone, tolerant when he is most vain and complimentary even when he develops a paunch; companionable when he is lonely and self-sacrificing when he insists’ upon teaching you how to exercise.

The big TRUTH about beauty is merely this. Regardless of her face or figure a woman can still be beautiful if she realizes that she cannot be beautiful to all men—but can be the most beautiful woman alive to one man. And even today one man is usually enough for any woman.

(First published in Whisper Magazine, 1959)

Things I learned yesterday: grilled bull penis is not delicious

[Los Angeles] No seriously, I was at Feng Mao with a buddy and bull penis was prominently displayed halfway down the menu. I would not normally order it but said buddy was feeling adventurous and ordered 2 skewers. Great. So we tried it 2 ways, the first way grilled slightly, the second way grilled crunchy.



Well let's put it this way, I managed to get through the first piece (grilled slightly) by chewing thru 3/4 of it and washing it down with beer. I tried to do the same thing with the second...but ended up chewing for 30 seconds and ended up spitting the damn thing out.

Are we doing it wrong, is this an acquired taste, or do they just put it on the menu for the lulz? By Chowhound

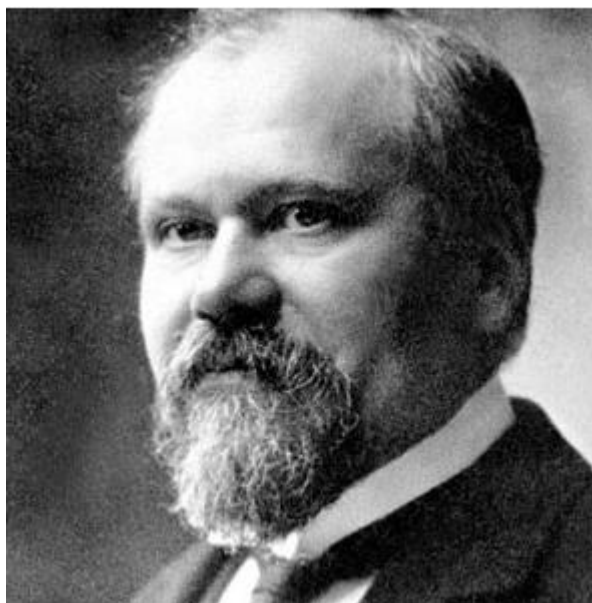
In Search for a Harem In Dubai ...



Twenty models from Ukraine were arrested in Dubai for indecent exposure ... Rumor has it that the women were in Dubai in search for a Harem.

Mathematics and Science

The Mathematical Creation by Henri Poincaré



Henri Poincaré, 1885-1912

The Genesis of mathematical creation is a problem which should intensely interest the psychologist. It is the activity in which the human mind seems to take least from the outside world, in which it acts or seems to act only of itself and on itself, so that in studying the procedure of geometric thought we may hope to reach what is most essential in man's mind.

This has long been appreciated, and some time back the journal called *L'Enseignement Mathématique*, edited by Laisant and Fehr, began an investigation of the mental habits and methods of work of different mathematicians. I had finished the main outlines of this article when the results of that inquiry were published, so I have hardly been able to utilize them and shall confine myself to saying that the majority of witnesses

confirm my conclusions; I do not say all, for when the appeal is to universal suffrage unanimity is not to be hoped.

A first fact should surprise us, or rather would surprise us if we were not so used to it. How does it happen there are people who do not understand mathematics? If mathematics invokes only the rules of logic, such as are accepted by all normal minds; if its evidence is based on principles common to all men, and that none could deny without being mad, how does it come about that so many persons are here refractory?

That not everyone can invent is nowise mysterious. That not everyone can retain a demonstration once learned may also pass. But that not everyone can understand mathematical reasoning when explained appears very surprising when we think of it. And yet those who can follow this reasoning only with difficulty are in the majority: that is undeniable, and will surely not be gainsaid by the experience of secondary-school teachers.

And further: how is error possible in mathematics? A sane mind should not be guilty of a logical fallacy, and yet there are very fine minds who do not trip in brief reasoning such as occurs in the ordinary doings of life, and who are incapable of following or repeating without error the mathematical demonstrations which are longer, but which after all are only an accumulation of brief reasonings wholly analogous to those they make so easily. Need we add that mathematicians themselves are not infallible?

The answer seems to me evident. Imagine a long series of syllogisms, and that the conclusions of the first serve as premises of the following: we shall be able to catch each of these syllogisms, and it is not in passing from premises to conclusion that we are in danger of deceiving ourselves. But between the moment in which we first meet a proposition as conclusion of one syllogism, and that in which we reencounter it as premise of another syllogism occasionally some time will elapse, several links of the chain will have unrolled; so it may happen that we have forgotten it, or worse, that we have forgotten its meaning. So it may happen that we replace it by a slightly different proposition, or that, while retaining the same enunciation, we attribute to it a slightly different meaning, and thus it is that we are exposed to error.

Often the mathematician uses a rule. Naturally he begins by demonstrating this rule; and at the time when this proof is fresh in his memory he understands perfectly its meaning and its bearing, and he is in no danger of changing it. But subsequently he trusts his memory and afterward only applies it in a mechanical way; and then if his memory fails him, he may apply it all wrong. Thus it is, to take a simple example, that we sometimes make slips in calculation because we have forgotten our multiplication table.

According to this, the special aptitude for mathematics would be due only to a very sure memory or to a prodigious force of attention. It would be a power like that of the whist-player who remembers the cards played; or, to go up a step, like that of the chess-player who can visualize a great number of combinations and hold them in his memory. Every good mathematician

ought to be a good chess-player, and inversely; likewise he should be a good computer. Of course that sometimes happens; thus Gauss was at the same time a geometer of genius and a very precocious and accurate computer.

But there are exceptions; or rather I err; I cannot call them exceptions without the exceptions being more than the rule. Gauss it is, on the contrary, who was an exception. As for myself, I must confess, I am absolutely incapable even of adding without mistakes. In the same way I should be but a poor chess-player; I would perceive that by a certain play I should expose myself to a certain danger; I would pass in review several other plays, rejecting them for other reasons, and then finally I should make the move first examined, having meantime forgotten the danger I had foreseen.

In a word, my memory is not bad, but it would be insufficient to make me a good chess-player. Why then does it not fail me in a difficult piece of mathematical reasoning where most chess-players would lose themselves? Evidently because it is guided by the general march of the reasoning. A mathematical demonstration is not a simple juxtaposition of syllogisms, it is syllogisms placed in a certain order, and the order in which these elements are placed is much more important than the elements themselves. If I have the feeling, the intuition, so to speak, of this order, so as to perceive at a glance the reasoning as a whole, I need no longer fear lest I forget one of the elements, for each of them will take its allotted place in the array, and that without any effort of memory on my part.

It seems to me then, in repeating a reasoning learned, that I could have invented it. This is often only an illusion; but even then, even if I am not so gifted as to create it by myself, I myself re-invent it in so far as I repeat it.

We know that this feeling, this intuition of mathematical order, that makes us divine hidden harmonies and relations, cannot be possessed by every one. Some will not have either this delicate feeling so difficult to define, or a strength of memory and attention beyond the ordinary, and then they will be absolutely incapable of understanding higher mathematics.

Such are the majority. Others will have this feeling only in a slight degree, but they will be gifted with an uncommon memory and a great power of attention. They will learn by heart the details one after another; they can understand mathematics and sometimes make applications, but they cannot create. Others, finally, will possess in a less or greater degree the special intuition referred to, and then not only can they understand mathematics even if their memory is nothing extraordinary, but they may become creators and try to invent with more or less success according as this intuition is more or less developed in them.

In fact, what is mathematical creation? It does not consist in making new combinations with mathematical entities already known. Anyone could do that, but the combinations so made would be infinite in number and most of them absolutely without interest. To create consists precisely in not making useless combinations and in making those which are useful and which are only a small minority. Invention is discernment, choice,

How to make this choice I have before explained; the mathematical facts worthy of being studied are those which, by their analogy with other facts, are capable of leading us to the knowledge of a mathematical law just as experimental facts lead us to the knowledge of a physical law. They are those which reveal to us unsuspected kinship between other facts, long known, but wrongly believed to be strangers to one another.

Among chosen combinations the most fertile will often be those formed of elements drawn from domains which are far apart. Not that I mean as sufficing for invention the bringing together of objects as disparate as possible; most combinations so formed would be entirely sterile. But certain among them, very rare, are the most fruitful of all.

To invent, I have said, is to choose; but the word is perhaps not wholly exact. It makes one think of a purchaser before whom are displayed a large number of samples, and who examines them, one after the other, to make a choice. Here the samples would be so numerous that a whole lifetime would not suffice to examine them. This is not the actual state of things. The sterile combinations do not even present themselves to the mind of the inventor. Never in the field of his consciousness do combinations appear that are not really useful, except some that he rejects but which have to some extent the characteristics of useful combinations. All goes on as if the inventor were an examiner for the second degree who would only have to question the candidates who had passed a previous examination.

But what I have hitherto said is what may be observed or inferred in reading the writings of the geometers, reading reflectively.

It is time to penetrate deeper and to see what goes on in the very soul of the mathematician. For this, I believe, I can do best by recalling memories of my own. But I shall limit myself to telling how I wrote my first memoir on Fuchsian functions. I beg the reader's pardon; I am about to use some technical expressions, but they need not frighten him, for he is not obliged to understand them. I shall say, for example, that I have found the demonstration of such a theorem under such circumstances. This theorem will have a barbarous name, unfamiliar to many, but that is unimportant; what is of interest for the psychologist is not the theorem but the circumstances.

For fifteen days I strove to prove that there could not be any functions like those I have since called Fuchsian functions. I was then very ignorant; every day I seated myself at my work table, stayed an hour or two, tried a great number of combinations and reached no results. One evening, contrary to my custom, I drank black coffee and could not sleep. Ideas rose in crowds; I felt them collide until pairs interlocked, so to speak, making a stable combination. By the next morning I had established the existence of a class of Fuchsian functions, those which come from the hypergeometric series; I had only to write out the results, which took but a few hours.

Then I wanted to represent these functions by the quotient of two series; this idea was perfectly conscious and deliberate, the analogy with elliptic

functions guided me. I asked myself what properties these series must have if they existed, and I succeeded without difficulty in forming the series I have called theta-Fuchsian.

Just at this time I left Caen, where I was then living, to go on a geologic excursion under the auspices of the school of mines. The changes of travel made me forget my mathematical work. Having reached Coutances, we entered an omnibus to go some place or other. At the moment when I put my foot on the step the idea came to me, without anything in my former thoughts seeming to have paved the way for it, that the transformations I had used to define the Fuchsian functions were identical with those of non-Euclidean geometry. I did not verify the idea; I should not have had time, as, upon taking my seat in the omnibus, I went on with a conversation already commenced, but I felt a perfect certainty. On my return to Caen, for conscience' sake I verified the result at my leisure.

Then I turned my attention to the study of some arithmetical questions apparently without much success and without a suspicion of any connection with my preceding researches. Disgusted with my failure, I went to spend a few days at the seaside, and thought of something else. One morning, walking on the bluff, the idea came to me, with just the same characteristics of brevity, suddenness and immediate certainty, that the arithmetic transformations of indeterminate ternary quadratic forms were identical with those of non-Euclidean geometry.

Returned to Caen, I meditated on this result and deduced the consequences. The example of quadratic forms showed me that there were Fuchsian groups other than those corresponding to the hypergeometric series; I saw that I could apply to them the theory of theta-Fuchsian series and that consequently there existed Fuchsian functions other than those from the hypergeometric series, the ones I then knew. Naturally I set myself to form all these functions. I made a systematic attack upon them and carried all the outworks, one after another. There was one however that still held out, whose fall would involve that of the whole place. But all my efforts only served at first the better to show me the difficulty, which indeed was something. All this work was perfectly conscious.

Thereupon I left for Mont-Valerien, where I was to go through my military service; so I was very differently occupied. One day, going along the street, the solution of the difficulty which had stopped me suddenly appeared to me. I did not try to go deep into it immediately, and only after my service did I again take up the question. I had all the elements and had only to arrange them and put them together. So I wrote out my final memoir at a single stroke and without difficulty.

I shall limit myself to this single example; it is useless to multiply them. In regard to my other researches I would have to say analogous things, and the observations of other mathematicians given in *L'Enseignement Mathématique* would only confirm them.

Most striking at first is this appearance of sudden illumination, a manifest sign of long, unconscious prior work. The role of this unconscious work in mathematical invention appears to me incontestable, and traces of it would be found in other cases where it is less evident. Often when one works at a hard question, nothing good is accomplished at the first attack. Then one takes a rest, longer or shorter, and sits down anew to the work. During the first half-hour, as before, nothing is found, and then all of a sudden the decisive idea presents itself to the mind. It might be said that the conscious work has been more fruitful because it has been interrupted and the rest has given back to the mind its force and freshness. But it is more probable that this rest has been filled out with unconscious work and that the result of this work has afterward revealed itself to the geometer just as in the cases I have cited; only the revelation, instead of coming during a walk or a journey, has happened during a period of conscious work, but independently of this work which plays at most a role of excitant, as if it were the goad stimulating the results already reached during rest, but remaining unconscious, to assume the, conscious form.

There is another remark to be made about the conditions of this unconscious work: it is possible, and of a certainty it is only fruitful, if it is on the one hand preceded and on the other hand followed by a period of conscious work. These sudden inspirations {and the examples already cited sufficiently prove this) never happen except after some days of voluntary effort which has appeared absolutely fruitless and whence nothing good seems to have come, where the way taken seems totally astray. These efforts then have not been as sterile as one thinks; they have set agoing the unconscious machine

and without them it would not have moved and would have produced nothing.

The need for the second period of conscious work, after the inspiration, is still easier to understand. It is necessary to put in shape the results of this inspiration, to deduce from them the immediate consequences, to arrange them, to word the demonstrations, but above all is verification necessary. I have spoken of the feeling of absolute certitude accompanying the inspiration; in the cases cited this feeling was no deceiver, nor is it usually. But do not think this is a rule without exception; often this feeling deceives us without being any the less vivid, and we only find it out when we seek to put on foot the demonstration. I have especially noticed this fact in regard to ideas coming to me in the morning or evening in bed while in a semi-hypnagogic state.

Such are the realities; now for the thoughts they force upon us. The unconscious, or, as we say, the subliminal self plays an important role in mathematical creation; this follows from what we have said. But usually the subliminal self is considered as purely automatic. Now we have seen that mathematical work is not simply mechanical, that it could not be done by a machine, however perfect. It is not merely a question of applying rules, of making the most combinations possible according to certain fixed laws. The combinations so obtained would be exceedingly numerous, useless and cumbersome. The true work of the inventor consists in choosing among these combinations so as to eliminate the useless ones or rather to avoid the trouble of making them, and the rules which must guide this choice are

extremely fine and delicate. It is almost impossible to state them precisely; they are felt rather than formulated. Under these conditions, how imagine a sieve capable of applying them mechanically ?

A first hypothesis now presents itself: the subliminal self is in no way inferior to the conscious self; it is not purely automatic; it is capable of discernment; it has tact, delicacy; it knows how to choose, to divine. What do I say? It knows better how to divine than the conscious self, since it succeeds where that has failed. In a word, is not the subliminal self superior to the conscious self? You recognize the full importance of this question. Boutroux in a recent lecture has shown how it came up on a very different occasion, and what consequences would follow an affirmative answer.

Is this affirmative answer forced upon us by the facts I have just given? I confess that, for my part, I should hate to accept it. Reexamine the facts then and see if they are not compatible with another explanation.

It is certain that the combinations which present themselves to the mind in a sort of sudden illumination, after an unconscious working somewhat prolonged, are generally useful and fertile combinations, which seem the result of a first impression. Does it follow that the subliminal self, having divined by a delicate intuition that these combinations would be useful, has formed only these, or has it rather formed many others which were lacking in interest and have remained unconscious?

In this second way of looking at it, all the combinations would be formed in consequence of the automatism of the subliminal self, but only the interesting ones would break into the domain of consciousness. And this is still very mysterious. What is the cause that, among the thousand products of our unconscious activity, some are called to pass the threshold, while others remain below? Is it a simple chance which confers this privilege? Evidently not; among all the stimuli of our senses, for example, only the most intense fix our attention, unless it has been drawn to them by other causes. More generally the privileged unconscious phenomena, those susceptible of becoming conscious, are those which, directly or indirectly, affect most profoundly our emotional sensibility.

It may be surprising to see emotional sensibility invoked a propos of mathematical demonstrations which, it would seem, can interest only the intellect. This would be to forget the feeling of mathematical beauty, of the harmony of numbers and forms, of geometric elegance. This is a true esthetic feeling that all real mathematicians know, and surely it belongs to emotional sensibility.

Now, what are the mathematic entities to which we attribute this character of beauty and elegance, and which are capable of developing in us a sort of esthetic emotion? They are those whose elements are harmoniously disposed so that the mind without effort can embrace their totality while realizing the details. This harmony is at once a satisfaction of our esthetic needs and an aid to the mind, sustaining and guiding. And at the same time, in putting under our eyes a well-ordered whole, it makes us foresee a mathematical

law. Now, as we have said above, the only mathematical facts worthy of fixing our attention and capable of being useful are those which can teach us a mathematical law. So that we reach the following conclusion: The useful combinations are precisely the most beautiful, I mean those best able to charm this special sensibility that all mathematicians know, but of which the profane are so ignorant as often to be tempted to smile at it.

What happens then? Among the great numbers of combinations blindly formed by the subliminal self, almost all are without interest and without utility; but just for that reason they are also without effect upon the esthetic sensibility. Consciousness will never know them; only certain ones are harmonious, and, consequently, at once useful and beautiful. They will be capable of touching this special sensibility of the geometer of which I have just spoken, and which, once aroused, will call our attention to them, and thus give them occasion to become conscious.

This is only a hypothesis, and yet here is an observation which may confirm it: when a sudden illumination seizes upon the mind of the mathematician, it usually happens that it does not deceive him, but it also sometimes happens, as I have said, that it does not stand the test of verification; well, we almost always notice that this false idea, had it been true, would have gratified our natural feeling for mathematical elegance.

Thus it is this special esthetic sensibility which plays the rôle of the delicate sieve of which I spoke, and that sufficiently explains why the one lacking it will never be a real creator.

Yet all the difficulties have not disappeared. The conscious self is narrowly limited, and as for the subliminal self we know not its limitations, and this is why we are not too reluctant in supposing that it has been able in a short time to make more different combinations than the whole life of a conscious being could encompass. Yet these limitations exist. Is it likely that it is able to form all the possible combinations, whose number would frighten the imagination? Nevertheless that would seem necessary, because if it produces only a small part of these combinations, and if it makes them at random, there would be small chance that the good, the one we should choose, would be found among them.

Perhaps we ought to seek the explanation in that preliminary period of conscious work which always precedes all fruitful unconscious labor. Permit me a rough comparison. Figure the future elements of our combinations as something like the hooked atoms of Epicurus. During the complete repose of the mind, these atoms are motionless, they are, so to speak, hooked to the wall; so this complete rest may be indefinitely prolonged without the atoms meeting, and consequently without any combination between them.

On the other hand, during a period of apparent rest and unconscious work, certain of them are detached from the wall and put in motion. They flash in every direction through the space .(I was about to say the room) where they are enclosed, as would, for example, a swarm of gnats or, if you prefer a more learned comparison, like the molecules of gas in the kinematic theory of gases. Then their mutual impacts may produce new combinations.

What is the role of the preliminary conscious work? It is evidently to mobilize certain of these atoms, to unhook them from the wall and put them in swing. We think we have done no good, because we have moved these elements a thousand different ways in seeking to assemble them, and have found no satisfactory aggregate. But, after this shaking up imposed upon them by our will, these atoms do not return to their primitive rest. They freely continue their dance.

Now, our will did not choose them at random; it pursued a perfectly determined aim. The mobilized atoms are therefore not any atoms whatsoever; they are those from which we might reasonably expect the desired solution. Then the mobilized atoms undergo impacts which make them enter into combinations among themselves or with other atoms at rest which they struck against in their course. Again I beg pardon, my comparison is very rough, but I scarcely know how otherwise to make my thought understood.

However it may be, the only combinations that have a chance of forming are those where at least one of the elements is one of those atoms freely chosen by our will. Now, it is evidently among these that is found what I called the *good combination*. Perhaps this is a way of lessening the paradoxical in the original hypothesis.

Another observation. It never happens that the unconscious work gives us the result of a somewhat long calculation *all made*, where we have only to

apply fixed rules. We might think the wholly automatic subliminal self particularly apt for this sort of work, which is in a way exclusively mechanical. It seems that thinking in the evening upon the factors of a multiplication we might hope to find the product ready made upon our awakening, or again that an algebraic calculation, for example a verification, would be made unconsciously. Nothing of the sort, as observation proves. All one may hope from these inspirations, fruits of unconscious work, is a point of departure for such calculations. As for the calculations themselves, they must be made in the second period of conscious work, that which follows the inspiration, that in which one verifies the results of this inspiration and deduces their consequences. The rules of these calculations are strict and complicated. They require discipline, attention, will, and therefore consciousness. In the subliminal self, on the contrary, reigns what I should call liberty, if we might give this name to the simple absence of discipline and to the disorder born of chance. Only, this disorder itself permits unexpected combinations.

I shall make a last remark: when above I made certain personal observations, I spoke of a night of excitement when I worked in spite of myself. Such cases are frequent, and it is not necessary that the abnormal cerebral activity be caused by a physical excitant as in that I mentioned. It seems, in such cases, that one is present at his own unconscious work, made partially perceptible to the over-excited consciousness, yet without having changed its nature. Then we vaguely comprehend what distinguishes the two mechanisms or, if you wish, the working methods of the two egos. And the

psychologic observations I have been able thus to make seem to me to confirm in their general outlines the views I have given.

Surely they have need of it, for they are and remain in spite of all very hypothetical: the interest of the questions is so great that I do not repent of having submitted them to the reader.

Le Raisonnement Mathematique, from *Science et Methode*. Ernest Flammarion, 1908, Paris.

History

Another Look at Atlantis by Willy Ley

This is a story I was told some thirty-five years ago by a novelist who swore that it actually happened. It concerned another writer whom both of us knew and who wrote a great deal for a weekly family magazine. One day the editor of that magazine, after an evening of spirited discussion with his wife and her two sisters, asked him to write a definitive article on Atlantis. If necessary, it could be a series of articles, but they should be definitive, clearing up the whole problem once and for all time!

The writer, whose knowledge of Atlantis was about equal to that of any other educated man who has not made a special study of the subject, phoned a librarian he knew and told him (this was in Europe, where librarians are usually male) that he had to read up on Atlantis and would be over the following morning. Would the librarian be so good and assemble the most important books for him?

When he arrived at the library there was a desk reserved for him, and it was piled high with books. The librarian explained that these were the most recent works and a few important older ones. And there was a paperbound sheaf of mimeographed pages. This was what the librarian called "a reasonably complete bibliography"—of about 1700 titles. After his friend had finished with the books he had pulled out, he might wish to check through the bibliography and mark what else he wanted to read. The library would not have all of these titles, of course, but a few score of them probably could be turned up.

I don't know what happened to that "definitive" article chances are it was never written.

However, other people who did not feel beaten down by the volume of earlier literature kept writing books on Atlantis. As has been the case in the past, they ranged over the whole spectrum from "inner visions" to sober attempts to find an interpretation that satisfied both historical tradition and recognized facts. My reason for bringing up the nearly talked- to-death Atlantis theme once more is that something very unusual has taken place in recent years: there are a few new facts!

No, it is not yet the "definitive" story that magazine editor wanted so desperately. For the core of the Atlantis problem is that the "definitive" solution involves an impossibility— namely that of reading the mind of a man who died over 2300 years ago.

I mean, of course, Plato, who lived from about 427 B.C. to 347 B.C.

Atlantis is mentioned in two of his works, the two "dialogues" ("discussions" would be a better label) Timaios and Kritias. They are the only, repeat, only sources. Every other mention of Atlantis is based on these writings of Plato. There are no independent sources.

Nor did Plato claim to have any direct and personal knowledge. He had one of his characters quote Solon, a historical figure (ca. 638 B.C. to 559 B.C.),

who was Archon of Athens (beginning in 594 B.C.) and who is known to have traveled extensively. So the true and again only source of the Atlantis story, if we accept Plato's word, is Solon. Please note that Solon was dead for 150 years when Plato was a young man; it is precisely as if a young man of our time told of something that, through family tradition, goes back to George Washington.

I just said that the original source was Solon if we accept Plato's statements. As for that there can be only two opinions: we can either believe that Plato wrote down what Solon originally said (admitting that Plato's version might not be an absolutely accurate rendering) or else we can believe that it was a fable invented for the purpose of providing a setting for Plato's "ideal state."

Aristotle, Plato's pupil, was convinced that Atlantis had been invented for philosophizing purposes. The Roman Pliny the Elder, four centuries later, just burdened Plato with the responsibility, sounding somewhat petulant, possibly because in all his omnivorous reading he had never found another source. The picture is the same with all the authors of the classical period: they either took Atlantis to be a "philosophical parable" or else just wrote "according to Plato." Nobody got excited one way or the other.

After the interval of one and a half millennia, when nobody had the time or inclination to think about such problems, a surprising number of learned men decided that Atlantis must have been based on a dim knowledge of the existence of a continent on the other side of the ocean. The Spanish historian Francisco Lopez de Gomara (1510-1560) was the first to say that America

must have been meant. Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1626) said the same, and the German educator Janus Joannes Bircherod even coined the sentence *orbe novo non novo* ("the New World is not new") in 1663. These thoughts were still echoed two centuries later by the great Alexander von Humboldt.

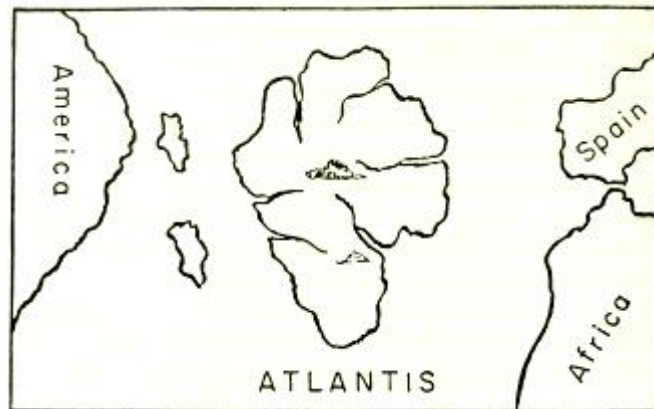


Fig. 1. Atlantis according to Kircher. From his book *Mondus subterraneus* (1644). This tracing has been inverted, in the original North is at the bottom.

The first man to have accepted the story as literally true seems to have been the learned and versatile Jesuit Father Athanasius Kircher (1601-1680), who invented the magic lantern and thought that he had deciphered hieroglyphic writing. He pictured Atlantis as a small continent in the Atlantic Ocean. (Fig. 1.). Though he said in his book that the island is pictured in precise agreement with Plato's description this is not really so, as we'll see. All that can be said in favor of it is that the small continent is about the size stated by Plato, that it has a mountain and several large rivers.

But before we go on it seems to be practical to see what Plato actually said. The information provided in the *Timaios*, the earlier of the two dialogues, is relatively meager. The man who tells about Atlantis in both dialogues is one Kritias, grandson of a man by the same name, who was a son of Dropides, who was a personal friend of Solon. Solon, Kritias the Younger, reports, traveled to Egypt; the actual and historical date for that trip is somewhere between 590 B.C. and 580 B.C. He went to the city of Sais and had long conversations with the priests there, who told him that their goddess Neith, whom the Greeks call Athena, had founded both cities: Sais 8000 years ago and Athens 9000 years ago. At that time there existed an island beyond the pillars of Hercules: "it was larger than Libya and Asia put together."

This last sentence needs two emendations. One is that "Asia" means what we call Asia minor, and the other is that the original Greek sentence contains a word that cannot be translated by just one other word. That word is *meizon*. The customary translation is "larger" in the meaning of "greater in extent." But the word can also mean "more powerful/" and since the story then goes on to talk about an invasion from Atlantis this translation sounds more likely. The priests said that this invasion had the purpose of subjugating the eastern portion of the Mediterranean and that they almost succeeded but were finally beaten by the Athenians. "Afterwards there occurred violent earthquakes and floods and in a single day and night of rain your warlike men in a body sank into the earth, and the island of Atlantis in a like manner disappeared and was sunk beneath the sea."

There is no more about Atlantis in the Timaios, and if the other dialogue which is named after Kritias did not exist, nobody would have paid much attention to the ancient invasion and ancient catastrophe. Everybody would have accepted Aristotle's commentary: "He who invented it [namely Atlantis] also destroyed it."

But it was the Kritias that excited everybody, because here the narrator went into detail. On the island in question there dwelled people, and Poseidon fell in love with one of the girls. He lived with her on a small mountain and begat five pairs of twins, all male and all future kings. He surrounded the mountain with several circular courses of water "so that no man could get to the island for ships and voyages were not yet heard of." That these concentric courses of water were made by a god must be taken to mean that this was a natural formation. But the later kings, after the population had become numerous, embellished on this formation with walls and canals through the circular courses of land, so that ships could pass from one into the other. The water courses were spanned by a bridge which, of course, had to have three sections. (This explains why the word "bridge" is used in the singular, though three bridges are involved.)

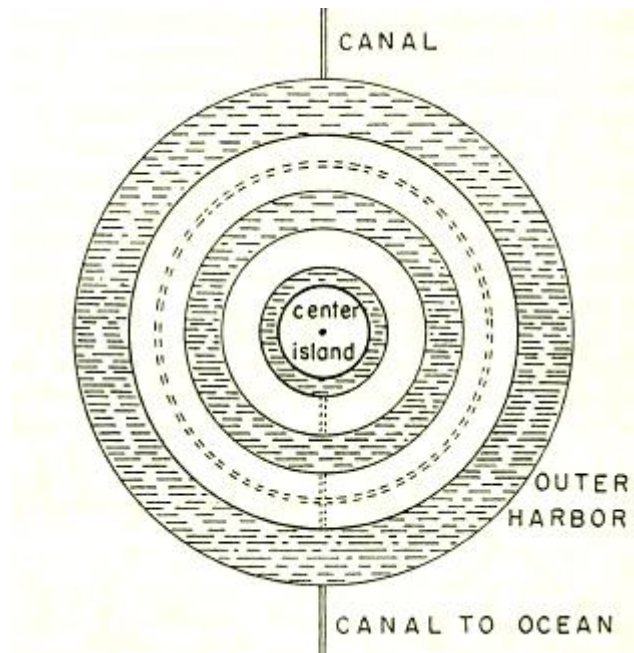


Fig. 2. The Center of the City. This is a scale drawing of the center section of the city, as described by Plato.

The broken circle indicates the race course.

The plan of the finished city is shown in Fig. 2. The central island, with the stele inscribed with the laws, a temple of Poseidon and the king's palace, had a diameter of 5 stadia. [*A stadion was divided into 600 feet, Greek. Its length is now taken to have been 185 meters, or 607 feet, U.S. measure. The secondary meaning— of "race course"—of this word is derived from the fact that the race course at Olympia was one stadion in length.*]

The innermost circular water course was one stadion in width, and the land circle around it had a width of two stadia. Then followed a water circle with a width of two stadia, also called the Inner Harbor; a circle of land, holding a "hippodrome" or circle course for race horses with a width of three stadia

came next, surrounded by a water course, the Outer Harbor, of a width of three stadia.

A straight canal, half a stadion in width and one and a half stadia in depth, stretched from the Outer Harbor to the ocean. It was fifty stadia long, so that the distance from the center of the island to the shore was 63% stadia. At that distance a high circular wall was built that went all around the city; on the side away from the ocean it touched the Grand Canal. The Grand Canal was 10,000 stadia in length, forming a rectangle of 2000 by 3000 stadia. The area was divided into 600 squares by irrigation ditches, each 100 feet in width. (Fig. 3)

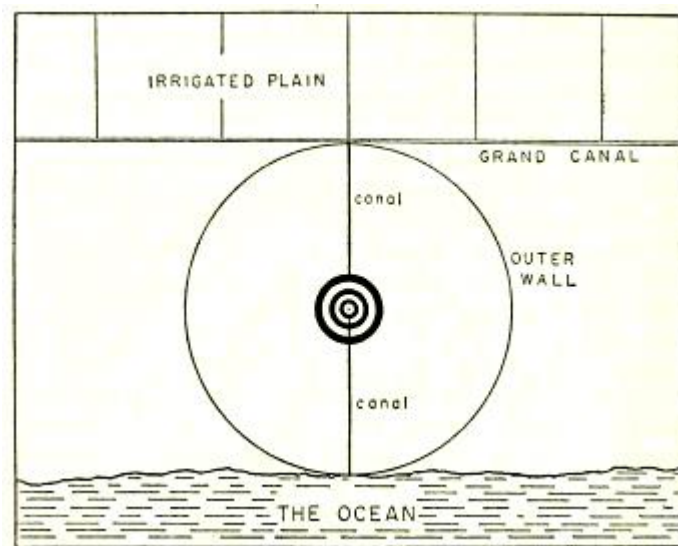


Fig. 3. Overall plan of the City.

The overall idea seems to have been that several rivers emptying into the Grand Canal would keep it full of water and fill the irrigation ditches, with the overflow going into the circular Outer Harbor and, finally, through the fifty-stadia canal into the ocean. A modern hydraulics engineer would be

quite unhappy with such an open system lacking all locks. Two years of drought in the interior, and ocean water would storm in, going the other way and ruining all crops. But let's not quibble here but go on. The total area—the irrigated plain, the city itself and the space between the irrigated plain and the seashore—would measure 3000 by 2127 stadia, or close to 6.4 million square stadia, approximately 77,600 square miles. Since there were ten kingdoms on the island assuming that they were all the same size, which is not stated anywhere explicitly—the total area of the island should have been about 800,000 square miles, roughly three times the size of Texas.

Even this condensed retelling shows that there is an enormous difference between the two Atlantis narratives in Plato's work. The *Timaios*, with its recital about an invasion and military engagements terminated by a natural catastrophe, does convey the impression that an older tale is here merely retold. But the *Kritias*, with its enormous elaboration of arrangements and dimensions, plus such detail as the color of the stones in the various walls and the kinds of metal used for ornamentation and reinforcement, is obviously the result of much pondering about what an outstanding city, originally conceived by a god and embellished by godlike kings should be like.

The "searchers for Atlantis," who accepted the story word for word, wall for wall and water course for water course, faced one major handicap, namely the great size. It prompted those who did not dare to doubt to look in all kinds of unlikely places. In sequence, southern Sweden, the Caucasus mountains, South America, Ceylon, Algiers and the western bulge of Africa

were acclaimed as the place where Atlantis must have been—
notwithstanding the minor fact that all of them are still in existence well
above sea level. And, of course, there was no trace of anything that could
possibly date back to 9600 B.C.

Could something be wrong with the figures themselves?

More than one scholar has guessed at a confusion between solar years and
periods of the moon. If the Egyptians spoke in terms of "moons" (of 30 days
each) then 9000 "years" would shrink to 742 actual years. Since Solon heard
the tale in about 590 B.C., the date would become 1332 B.C., a far more
believable figure. But there is another possibility for a mistake. It is said in
so many words in the *Kritias* that the Egyptian records had been translated
into Egyptian from another language—it is not stated which one. Solon then
translated them into Greek, and he may have taken the Egyptian written
symbol for "100" to mean "1000." In that case the invasion would date 900
years before Solon's visit or about 1500 B.C., while the rectangular plain
enclosed by the Grand Canal would measure 200 by 300 stadia or 23 by
34 miles. The city itself would remain the same size, because all the
figures involved are smaller than "100." [*This assumes, of course, that the
plan of the city was a part of Solon's tale; most modern commentators have
strong doubts about that.*]

The suggestion that the problem had been made intractable by such a simple
mistake in translation was made by the seismologist Professor Anghelos
Galanapoulos. Since Prof. Galanapoulos is Greek, he is thoroughly

acquainted with all the Greek legends and with everything by and about Plato. And Prof. Galanapoulos has been thinking about Atlantis for a long time.

Under 36.5° northern latitude and 25.5° eastern longitude in the blue Aegean Sea there lies a small group of islands, collectively known as the Santorini group. It consists of two large islands, Thera and Therasia, and a few small ones, namely Aspronisi ("white island") and three with names that have the word kameni ("burning") in common. They are Palaia Kameni, Nea Kameni and Mikra Kameni, the "old burning island," the new one and the tiny one. They are all volcanic. In 1866 there was a long-lasting eruption that was carefully investigated by a French scientist named Fouque. With the aid of data furnished by Fouque, Professor Melchior Neumayr of the University of Vienna drew up a table of known eruptions.

There had been one in 198 B.C., during which the island of Palaia Kameni came into existence. Another eruption in 726 A.D. enlarged this island. In 1573 Mikra Kameni was formed. In 1650 there was another eruption that produced only minor changes, but in 1707 there began one that lasted five years, with Nea Kameni as the result. And the one in 1866 formed an island that was named Georgios Island but soon combined with Nea Kameni.

In, say, 250 B.C. the Santorini group consisted of Thera and Therasia only; in 1890 it looked as shown in Fig. 4.

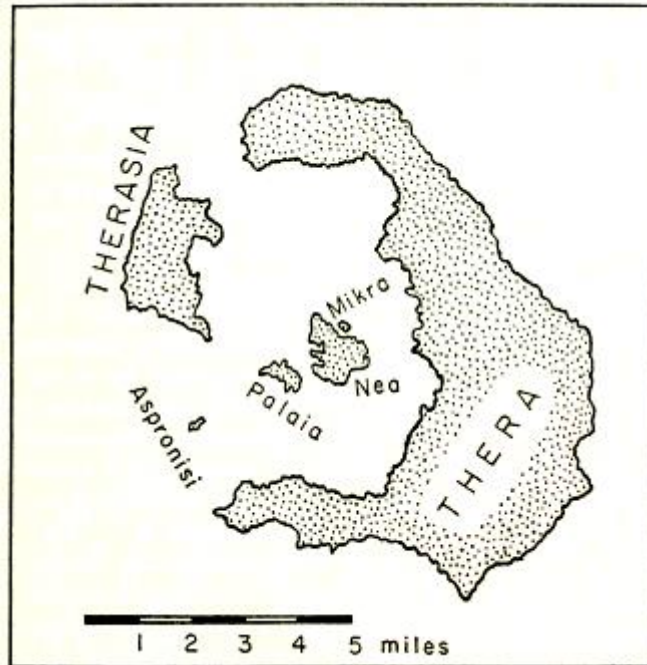


Fig. 4. The Santorini group in the Aegean Sea.

To the geologists of the latter part of the nineteenth century the shapes of Thera and Therasia suggested that they were remaining pieces of a former volcano that had covered the whole area of the Santorini group and that had blown up at some time in the past. Since the eastern Mediterranean is an area of early literacy, but since no classical record made any mention of such a catastrophe, the great eruption must have taken place before writing, say before 1000 B.C. The explosion of Krakatoa in the Sunda Sea, that took place in late August of 1883 and threw a cubic mile of pumice and other volcanic ejecta into the atmosphere, came just in time to demonstrate what a volcano could do. The catastrophe that left Thera and Therasia must have been of the type of the Krakatoa explosion, and probably even bigger and more violent.

Of course, Thera and Therasia are covered with thick layers of pumice and volcanic ashes. It probably would never have occurred to anybody to start excavations to see whether anything could be found underneath these layers. If the thought had occurred to anybody, it is doubtful whether money for such a project could have been found. But science was aided by a commercial venture at this point.

Greek businessmen "mined" the pumice for making cement that was needed on the mainland for construction purposes. And under the pumice and ashes remains of old buildings were found! Household utensils of shaped clay were recovered. No trace of inscriptions was found and virtually no metallic objects. But Fouque described two golden rings, implying trade since there is no gold locally. Too bad that one could only guess at the date of this early inhabitation.

I have to admit that I do not know who was the first to connect the ancient eruption of Santorini with the end of the Minoan culture on Crete. Early Crete had an astonishing culture, with large cities and enormous temples, and it was a maritime power. As knowledge about ancient Crete grew, its role as the dominant sea power in the eastern Mediterranean became so clear that some scholars began to wonder whether the early Cretans were not the model for the sea-going Phaiakians of Homer's *Odyssey*.

And since there are many resemblances between the sailors from Homer's Scheria and Plato's Atlanteans, and since both resemble the ancient Cretans, it has been suggested at least twice—by the American E. S. Balch in 1921

and the German W. Brandenstein in 1952—that Plato's Atlantis was mainly a poetic memory of the Cretans.

Legends, poetry, speculation and philosophy aside, there was a very real mystery about the end of the Minoan culture on Crete. Before about 1400 B.C. there were large cities, but some time after that date there were only small rural settlements. And most of the archeologists who tried to reconstruct life during the Minoan culture slowly became convinced that there was a sudden "event" that marked the beginning of the change. In places it looked as if artisans had dropped their tools in the middle of their normal activities and run away. The most obvious explanation was that there had been a sudden call to arms to ward off an invasion. It sounded simple and also sounded logical, but there were difficulties. A would-be invader would first have been engaged by the large Cretan fleet, so that a sudden call to arms was not too likely. Besides, who could have invaded Crete?

It was an event, all right. But the event was the eruption of Santorini—which is now estimated to have thrown about four times the volume of pumice and cinders into the atmosphere as Krakatoa did in 1883. While the sudden appearance of enormous black clouds must have been frightening, the fall of cinders and ashes at such a distance could not have been too serious. But such an eruption of an island volcano produces an enormous tidal wave. The one caused by the Krakatoa explosion drowned over 36,000 people on the neighboring islands. The wave from the Santorini explosion must have smashed the whole Cretan fleet, probably assembled along the north shore of the island. It killed an unknown number of Cretans, and it caused the end of

the Minoan culture, eliminating it much faster and more thoroughly than any invasion by human enemies would have done. (Fig. 5.)

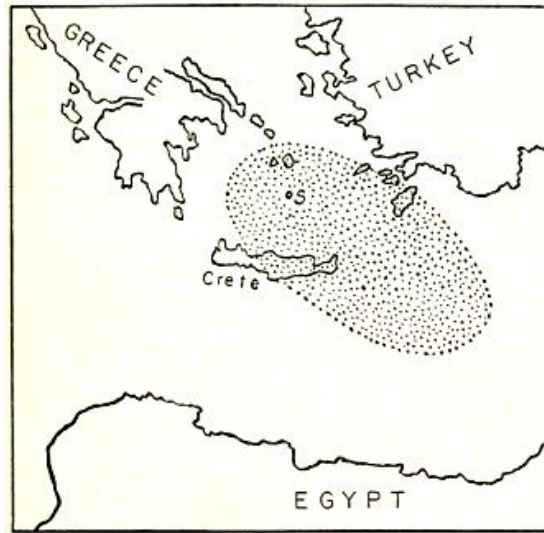


Fig. 5. The area covered by volcanic ash
from the eruption of 1500 B.C.

The effects of the distant volcanic eruption were felt as far away as Egypt, though in Egypt the effects were psychological —darkness for a period of time—rather than physical.

So here we have, in the right area and fairly closely at the right time, the great natural catastrophe of which Solon spoke. And it fits the general picture: the Greeks would have learned about it from the Egyptians. The Egyptians could also have told Solon about invasions from the West. We know that there were such invasions by what the Egyptians call the "sea people." Actually these invasions took place about 250 years after the Santorini catastrophe; but, since all this was told to Solon another 600 years

later, the Egyptians may have confused the sequence of events. Or else Solon did not understand too well what they said. Or else Plato thought that it would make a better story if a human invasion was terminated by a natural catastrophe.

The new knowledge about the approximate date of the Santorini catastrophe as the reason for the end of the Minoan culture on Crete has certainly shed new light on the "sources" of the Atlantis story. It does seem more likely now that Solon actually brought the tale from Egypt and the manuscript of the older Kritias—believed by most scholars to have been Plato's literary invention—might have existed.

But Professor Galanopoulos went one step farther. Knowing, from personal observation, that Santorini was inhabited before the catastrophe, he has superimposed the scale map of Plato's city on the map of the Santorini group. He found that the whole group would fit inside the Outer Wall of Plato's city and that the city itself would fit into the space between Thera and Therasia. As any one of my readers can try for himself, there is such a fit, though a rather poor one.

Personally I consider the similarity in size just a coincidence. I don't think that Santorini was Atlantis ... though there can hardly be any doubt that Santorini was the main cause of the Atlantis story.

Poetry

In a Café by Will Bray

He — You are a sweet girl
and I shall throw you into the river
you are a sweet girl
and I shall buy you narcissi
you are a sweet girl
and I shall give you wormwood
you are a sweet girl
and I shall chew your ear
you are a sweet girl
and I shall leave you for a moment

She — I am going to leave *you* for a moment

He – I am going to leave *you* for a moment
leave YOU
leave YOU
a moment
a moment
oh well
oh!

It's a Toil, that we know by Aki Kurosawa

The Olympics are finally here
but we in Tokyo ... we fear
That which we can't see

We welcomed strangers in the past
but now ... today ...we cannot cast
A smile to our faces ...

It's a toil, that we know
And a wicked blow
To our prestige ...

The stadiums sit all empty,
and what will be will be ...
It can't end fast enough, for me

My sister's she's a volunteer
And for her health we all do fear
But she doesn't care ...

And she says to me ... look
Big sis ...you always worry far too much
I'll be fine, believe me.

But she's my little sis Hell!
And I know her far too well,
Just you see!

I won't mind if little sis says ...
Haha, I told you so ...
I will grin and bare it.

It will just be fine
to hear her voice
In a month or two.

Five Short Poems by Simon Perchik

1

This shadow half iron, half
reaching out, breaking loose
--with both hands the hands

that no longer come for you
and in their place the dirt
grows back together

--in such a wound you die
in two places at the same time
make a path for the sky

you remember and underneath
--nothing but your arms
tearing each other apart

--handful by handful there's room
for a little more shadow
a little more you can say.

2

The rain climbing along your wrist
makes it seem easy --you breathe
through your hand, for two

--it helps to wet your eyelids
look where water has taken root
in pieces, knows how to grieve

the way your arm throws out
its still warm breezes and each morning
heavier --dirt learned this long ago

still fills your mouth with the word
for sister so nothing
can break without thirst

or blossom or with your hand
crushing you for more tears
and morning after morning.

3

You must enjoy the risk
swallowing rainwater, splashing
so close to the ground

wait alone for the train
you know is never in time
can't rub the tracks dry

or keep you from leaning too far
--it's the chance you take, wave
--sometimes waves, sometimes for nothing.

4

You mourn the way this sand
has no strength, keeps warm
between one day and another

and your closed hands
that need the place
left by a small stone

dropping slowly in water
though what rests here
is the emptiness already mist

and nothing starts again
--you dig as if this beach
blossoms once your fingers

open and these dead
lose their way among the flowers
that no longer come home

--you kneel easily now
pulled down by your shadow
following head first as rain

heavier and heavier
tracing a face with just your lips
and worn out nod.

5

You have this kinship, the limp
balances you and the Earth
already blossoming

with nothing under it
though you lift one foot
closer to the other

hillside after hillside
the way mud settles and clots
--you're used to losing, come

so this cane can grab your hand
almost in time and what's left
above the ground, knows

you're drowning, in rain
stops and starts, in dirt
and tells you everything.

The Mix of a Perfect Martini by William Webster

I truly miss the sound
Of ice cubes tingling within
A steel martini mixer.

I truly miss the sight
Of a buxom barmaid
Jiggling as she shakes it.

I truly miss the
‘Want an olive with that?’
And the smile when I ask for three

I truly miss the
‘Did I make it just right this time?’
And the smirk on her face when I say

Maybe me another one ...
You are getting better at it
Just shake it a bit more ... will’ ya!

Midnight Nekyia by Joseph Jon

I must have come through the Ivory Gate:
The Sun is asleep but his daughters awake
And tell me they will take me to Dark Night,
Far from Thalamus and the sensible paths,
The Hubble Universe and mathematical handshakes,
Far from where they shudder into daybreak,
To be carried through All Places by Her
Who waits, ready, in dark Vancouver alleyways,
Willing to teach me All Things.
The world is off but my eyes are unclosed,
And I am curious about the shadows
That stretch their hands to reach into consciousness:
I am aware and sense them whispering, forgotten,
And know myself instantly, despairingly, with smiles.
The old wino had warned me of these dreams
And how with wine to speak with some and dull the rest:
But She tells me She will teach me All Things.
I must have come through the Ivory Gate.

J'ai Perdu Mon Paris ... Hélas! by Rose Lang

I feel hollow inside

As if I have already died

Yet I breathe ... in and out...

But just can't walk about

To my favorite places

They are lost to me, traces

In a corner of my memory.

Will life ever go back, to be

What it was before the plague

Descended on the arches, and

Walkways of my beloved place

J'ai perdu Mon Paris ... Hélas!

Mountains are Forever by Susan Dale

The old mountain eyes, open
When glaciers crushed through creation
Were yet open when Indian tribes
Took refuge in their caverns
But blinking when pioneers
Brought wagons across mountain trails

The wise old eyes, closed tight now
Do not see snow, nor the wildflowers
Inching up their marble flesh
But moving beyond____
until floating amongst mountain clouds
I turn to look back
Through six realms of infinity
And teeter at the precipice
Of memories and mortality
To remember the golden nectar
That dropped on crystal-clear days
Of measured spaces I thought would last
Until I lie by the broken pillars
At the feet of the gods of fate
Uncounted the smiles that stretched wide
My untried heart
My heart to be bitten off and spit out

After an epoch beginning from the womb
Of which I emerged, screaming and kicking
Solely to propagate the earth
With open arms did I embrace life

Life, that snarling, snorting creature
Panting, prowling, clamouring for time
Time, with its warm gauze breath
And spineless shadows
Growing thin in the hours
Stretching into tomorrow

Time, the melting wax and singed wicks
Of those days I sat
On the long hands of clocks tick-tocking
Through lemon-yellow afternoons
Shining with succulent sun

But that same, sticky-honey time
Is running into long abandoned coal-cellars
Piled with the ashes of yesterday
Not swept away,

But lying forgotten and gray

Dim, misty___ the dawn

When I could no longer see
The differentiating line
Between earth and sky
And when others see the milky way
Cresting a crescendo of stars
I see nets of night
Hanging in the skies to catch a waning moon
Creaky mouse sounds run around the corners of my head
And the luminous rains that sing to violets
Chill my bones
Quickly, I turn to the flicker of a shadow
Jump at a sudden light that slips
Into the walls behind time
And know I am two steps away from threadbare quiet
And the mortality sewn into the hem
Of every mortal fabric
We stood beneath it at Calvary
And see it forever and a thousand times
Wearing laurels of victory

Broken from the roots that held me to yesterday
A tumbleweed lost between dimensions
Blind, vacuous____
Being swept along by the winds
Of space, of distance
Across the wounded earth

Into a sky I feel heaving with
heavy breaths and merciful heart
To make a place for me
Amongst myriad moons
And the long arms of eternity

I Would Rather Sleep Alone by Annie Gavan

My Boyfriend has a big one ...

 So big that it hurts every time
He forces his way with me.

I tell him to stop,
 But he doesn't listen to me.
He just pushes
 and pushes
 and pushes

So I tell him
 as the sun goes down
No you cannot stay tonight
 I would rather sleep alone.

Either you
 or your ego
 ... has got to go

You Don't Seem to Care ... by Isabella Montsouris

I want you
 to carry me about
 in a small; box
 in your jacket
close to your heart

Not just a picture of me
 mind you, but me
 in my entirety
 so that I can hear the
pitter-patter of your heart

When a beautiful girl
 catches your eye
 and I can kick and scream
 and ask her ...
what about me?

You don't seem to care
 about me in my entirety
 even though you carry
 my picture in your jacket
close to your heart ...

For interesting Mathematics and Science Books ...



PYTHAGORAS PUBLISHING
Mathematics, Physics and Astronomy
Vancouver, BC Canada

Over one hundred and fifty titles available at Amazon

Editor in Chief: Patrick Bruskiewich

Art

Boy oh Boy ... by Ani Gavani

















Ceci n'est pas par Patrick Bruskiewich

Ceci n'est pas ... (This is not ...) is a whimsical title of a genre of DaDaist art most famous for the piece *Ceci n'est pas un pipe*. Ceci n'est pas ... is meant to pay homage to the DaDa Movement on its 100th anniversary.

The DaDa Movement began as a moral and philosophical response to the horrors of the Great War (1914-1918). It is a movement that steps beyond surrealism and is meant to question the underlying precepts of human perception and philosophy. The DaDa movement included artists like ManRay and for a time Picasso and Dali. I have a small mixed media piece that puts one of my old pipes in front of a reproduction of the DaDa artwork *Ceci n'est pas un pipe* (this is not a pipe).

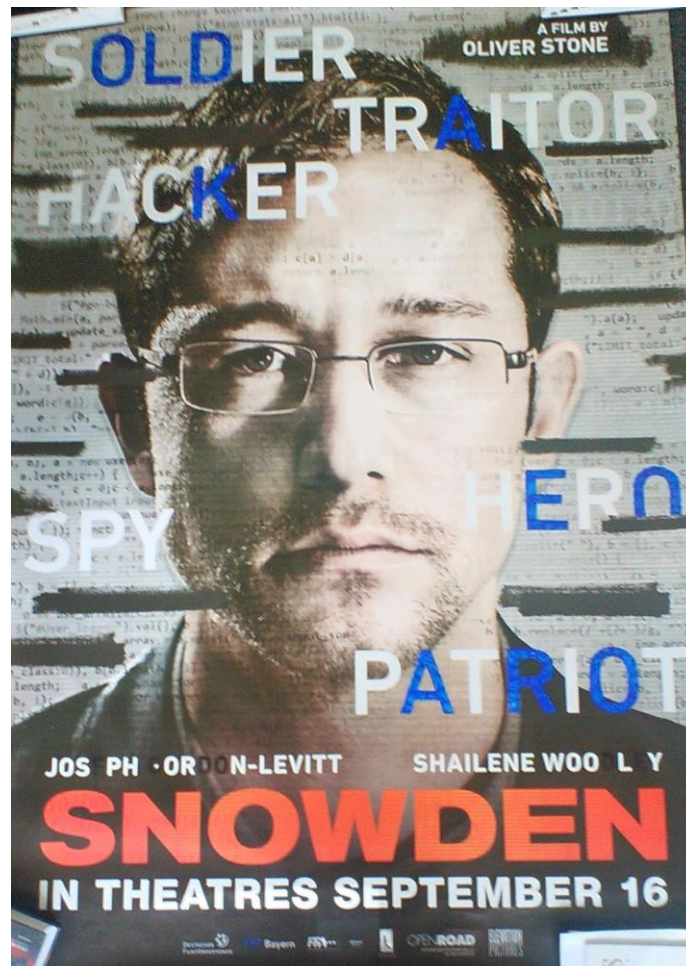


Ceci n'est pas un pipe ...



Ceci n'est pas une mouche ...

I have taken the poster from the 2017 Oliver Stone film *Snowden* and made it into a DaDa piece titled *Ceci n'est pas en clair – decode le* (this is not clear – decode it). There is a hidden message in the piece that the viewer needs to decode.



Ceci n'est pas en clair – decode le ...

You try to decipher: a a d e f f f k l o o r u

For the piece *Ceci n'est pas la logique* (This is not logical) I have borrowed artistic sensibilities from ver Meer, Picasso, Raphael, and Dali, as well as popular themes.

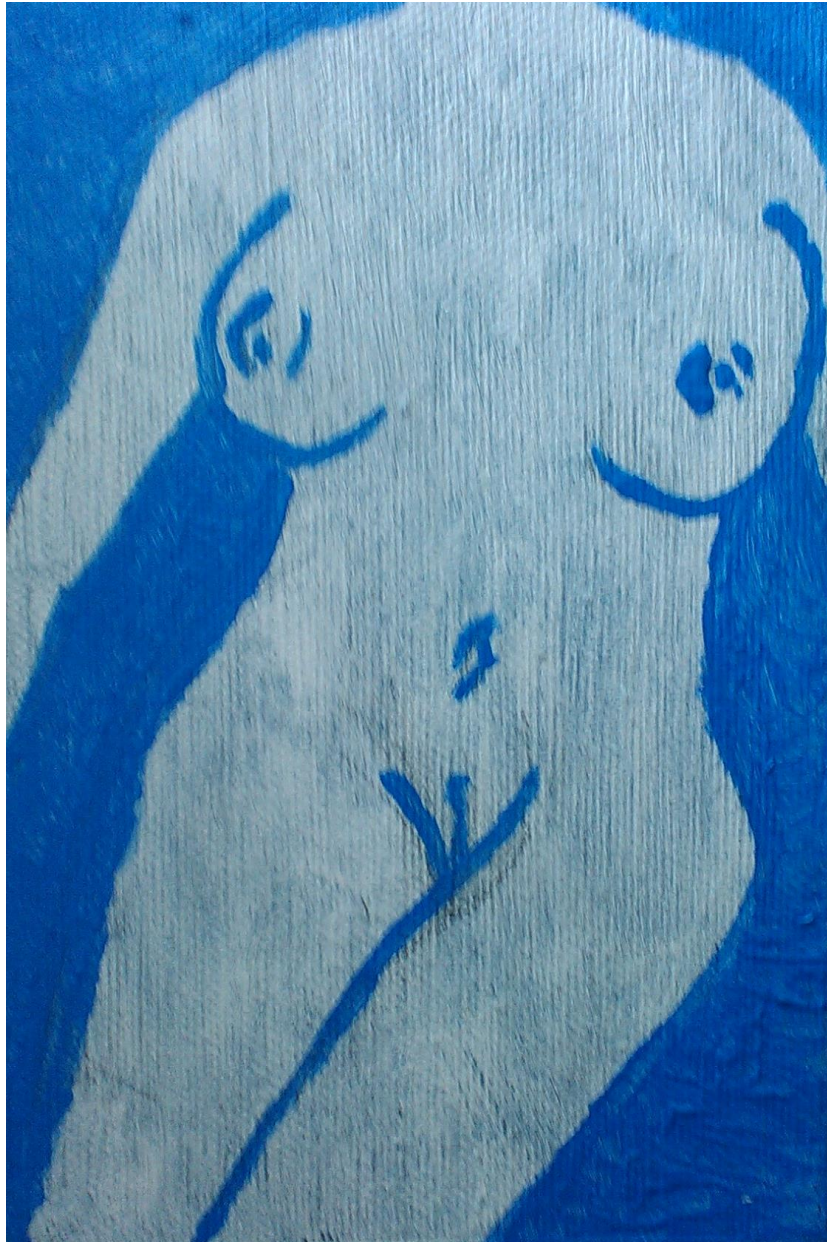


Ceci n'est pas la logique ...



Ceci n'est pas de camouflage ...

DaDa also applied to figurative pieces. *Ceci n'est pas un visage* ,



Ceci n'est pas un vrai visage ...

There are also DaDa artwork about the absence of images like in the case of the trees and their shadows, the shadow of the photographer, as well as the leaves on the sidewalk and their shadows *Ceci n'est pas une image*



Ceci n'est pas une image ...



Ceci n'est pas une odalisque ...



Ceci n'est pas un dessert ...



Ceci n'est pas une famille ...



Ceci n'est pas du travail ...



Ceci n'est pas bien ranger ...



Ceci n'est pas une poupée ...



Ceci n'est pas une fleur ... mais une femme qui s'épanouir



Ceci n'est pas gentille ...



Ceci n'est pas la source de vie ...



Ceci n'est pas un jeu



Ceci n'est pas une serviette ...



Ceci n'est pas une combinaison ...



Ceci n'est pas un mot obscène ...



Ceci n'est pas la solitude ...



Ceci n'est pas l'amour ...



Ceci n'est pas Ophelia.



Ceci n'est pas une ange ...



Ceci n'est pas un mot



Ceci n'est pas un oiseau



Ceci n'est pas un Matisse



Ceci n'est pas un Picasso ...



Ceci n'est pas possible...



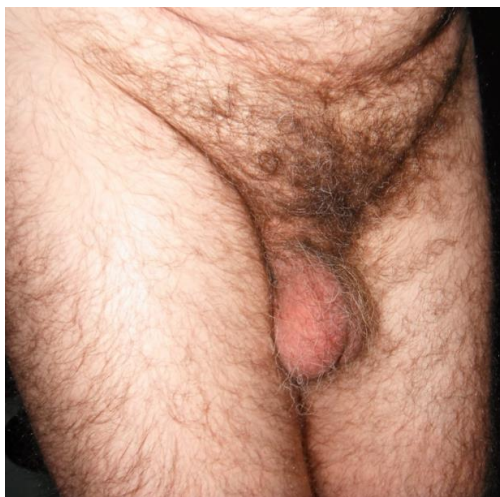
Ceci n'est pas une sauvage ...



Ceci n'est pas une geante



Ceci n'est pas la musique ...



Ceci n'est pas une pomme ...



Ceci n'est pas la paradis ...



Ceci n'est pas une artiste ...



Ceci n'est pas une rouge



Ceci n'est pas une danse



Ceci n'est pas une femme habille ...



Ceci n'est pas des frères ..



Ceci n'est pas en couleurs ...



Ceci n'est pas en noir et blanc...



Ceci n'est pas une femme ...



Ceci n'est pas un tournesol ...



Ceci n'est pas une chasseuse ...



Ceci n'est pas un arbre



Ceci n'est pas un monstre ...



Ceci n'est pas mariage ...



Ceci n'est pas l'amour ...



Ceci n'est pas une fontaine ...



Ceci n'est pas une métaphore ...



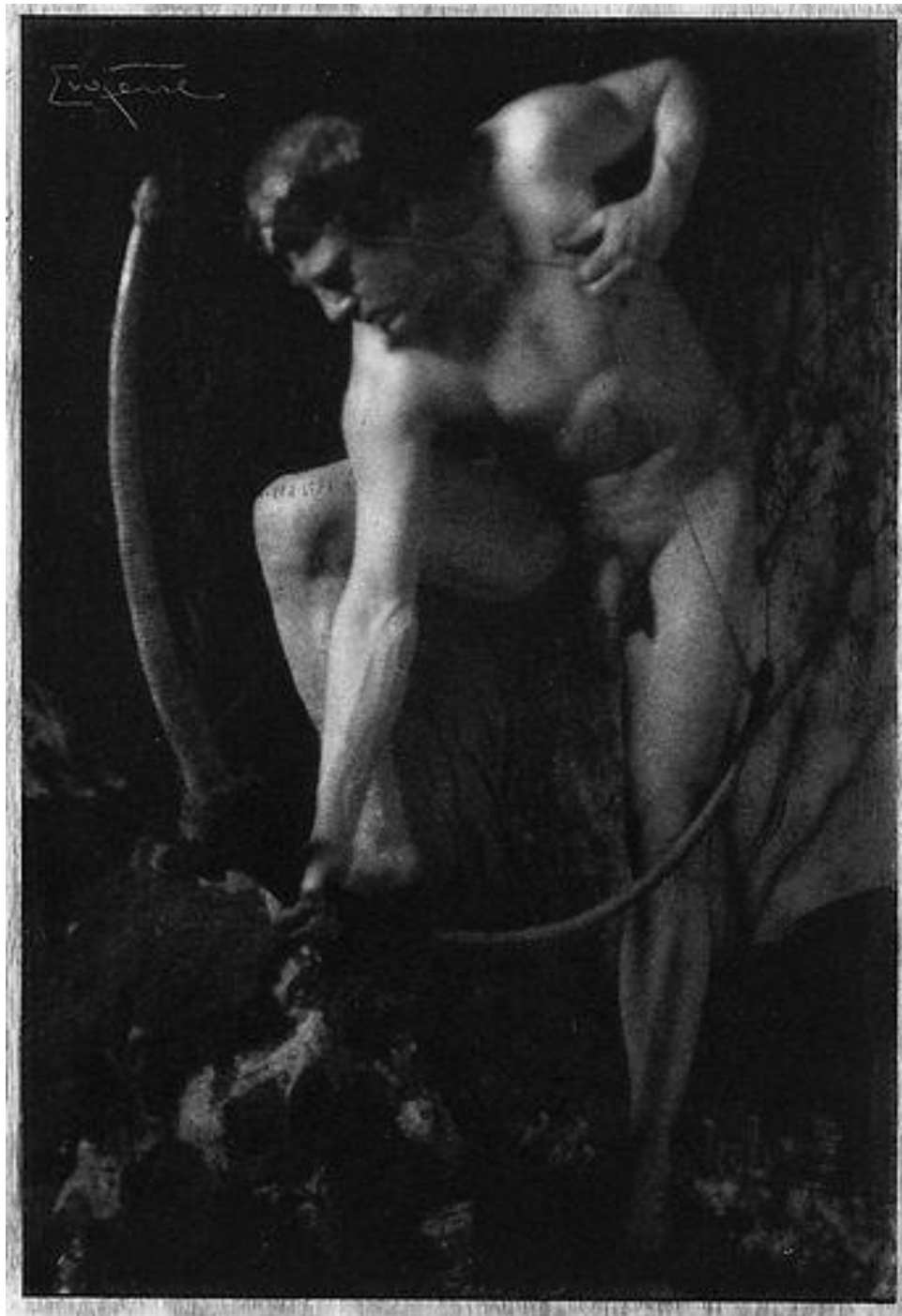
Ceci n'est pas la geometrie ...



Ceci n'est pas une séraphine ...



Ceci n'est pas ... non plus



Ceci n'est pas Eros ...



Ceci n'est pas Psyche ...



Ceci n'est pas l'école ...



Ceci n'est pas David ...



Ceci n'est pas la realité ...



Ceci n'est pas Hercules ...



Ceci n'est pas une paonne ...



Ceci n'est pas Dieu ...



Ceci n'est pas une triomphe ...



Ceci n'est pas la sexe ...



Ceci n'est pas la politique ...



Ceci n'est pas une mirage ...



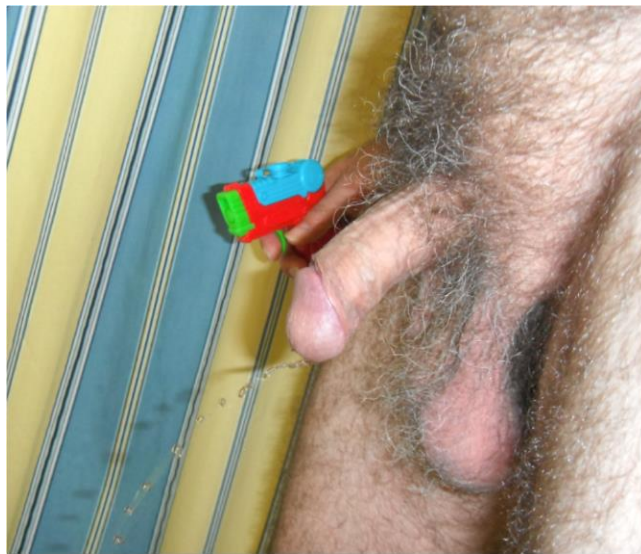
Ceci n'est pas une sculpture ...



Ceci n'est pas en balance ...



Ceci n'est pas un pistole



Ceci n'est pas ... non plus



Ceci n'est pas une rose ...



Ceci n'est pas femme ... ni l'homme



Ceci n'est pas confortable ...



Ceci n'est pas un visage faux



Ceci n'est pas un Botticelli ...

Twenty Four Hours in the Life of Chloe by Ani Gavani





















A collection of fine literature, poetry and magazine titles



Over one hundred titles available at Amazon

Editor in Chief: Patrick Bruskiewich

Novella

A Midsummer's Night Dream by Patrick Bruskiewich

It was very much a Mid Summer's Dream. A few years ago I was invited to a special costume party at a posh club in Vancouver. The club is so posh that I am told it has gold hinges on its doors! That night I searched and searched but could not find them. Hell, maybe it is an urban rumor, or maybe I have this place mixed up with its counterpart in Montreal.

The gathering was a Midsummer's Night costume party that a neighbor had been invited to and wanted to be chaperoned. At a similar soiree a few years back she had been manhandled by a drunkard and she didn't want another repeat of the 'hand up the dress thing'. She said the drunkard might be there tonight and she might need my moral support. I asked her if I should bring a pair of brass knuckles (not that I had any). She shook her head. She said she would dress herself up as Titania, the faerie princess, and well, I decided to have as much fun as I could. I even wrote a poem about her costume that evening as Titania:

Titania

Queen of the Midsummer's
Princess of the Faeries
God has blessed her
with jewels that sparkle,
orbs that titillate
and set men to lunacy.

Such splendor doth
make Oberon jealous
lest men do stray by moonlight.
She is Titanic ... with
her Play on words,
her puns, her linguistic fun
but! Prey tell, anger
her naught for she
shall lock wits with
the witless and leave
you less a man ...
A unique, cocklebind
and you the fool
shall shake your speare
at her, then realize
too late it has been thrown!
Come what might
she shall get to the
bottom of it all
of that is certain!
Sweet Titania, pink and white,
dance your dance for us tonight
fill the air with pixie dust
and magical perfumed lust.
The centaurs, satyrs and minotaurs
with you in sight, will

leave such marked appetite.
Let them then peer up to
the moon and thank heaven
for your graces, before seek thee
that other other place, your throne
where Cleopatra's envy
doth remind us that the Nile,
the fountain of life, is the
Aethiop's jewel, so much more
splendid then that paltry bauble
hung upon mere mortal men...

And Soft, we know with certain that
she Titania is our Faerie Queen.

My neighbor dances and teaches belly dancing and can charm the veils off the King and his seductress Salome alike. So I went all out on my costumes so as not to disappoint my next good neighbor!

I began by creating a verisimilitude to William Shakespeare and found I rather enjoyed the whole costuming thing (or maybe I was bored and had too much time on my hand) and so I created several other costumes in and above the one that had me arrive at the function wearing aquamarine tights under a pair of boxer shorts, a balloon of a cotton shirt with wooden buttons, a brown Cashmere sash across my body, a pair of leather clogs, a necklace of

dyed fresh water pearls and ... well ... you get the picture ... even the dullards realized I was William Shakespeare.

When we tumbled into the cab to make our way across town to the party our mirth got the better of the cabbie and to our great amusement when we arrived at the place the cabbie insisted ‘the ride was on him.’ That must tell you that we truly looked and played the roll – right down to Titania’s magic wand, and the pixie dust in her hair.

As we danced up the steps into the posh party place we were greeted like royalty. This was the beginning of a night of pleasantries that Shakespeare could well have immortalized in poetry or prose.

The place was already packed with revelers when we arrive fashionably late. It is not good to arrive unfashionably early and look too eager. Of course there were many unfashionably dressed people, the dullards in their suits and cocktail dresses – these were the *looky-louses* and their trophy boyfriends. If you don’t know what a *looky-louse*, it is a contemptible or unpleasant person who dresses up demanding attention. The place was infested with the looky’s, perhaps because the other half were dressed for the Midsummer’s in costumes that were somewhat bold and many times rather revealing and, probably more importantly because the evening was sponsored and so the alcohol and hors-d’oeuvres were free. From the moment we stepped through the door I would encounter quite a few of these unpleasant looky types, and pike them off with my Shakespeare.

When we arrived my friend made an immediate dash for the dance floor and I decided to join her. Over my shoulder was a bag that held my other costumes and so I tucked the bag under the leg of a grand piano, smiled at the young lady playing the piano (her music was being drowned out by the canned music) and followed my friend onto the very crowded and wild dance floor. There was a spinning ball throwing flashing light everywhere, and the fancy costumes and jewelry of the dancers flashed like sparkling stars in heaven.

On the dance floor it was bump and grind music, but my friend was in a bump and grind mood. I only took a few steps onto the wooden dance floor before I was crowded out. It was almost atomic, almost Brownian movement. I had danced by myself on the peripherals of the dance floor for a mere ten seconds when a looky who had been watching me stepped onto the dance floor and latched herself to me hoping to bump and grind. Trying to get a rise out of me, she had no shame. She had a low cut aquamarine dress and matching shoes. In the brush I knew she wasn't wearing a brassiere. She brushed her hip next to mine and I did not see any lines. That meant she wasn't wearing panties.

The glazed look on her eyes told me she was already either drunk or completely stoned. She gave me that smirk of someone who wanted to glom and well, the night was young and I had other plans. I let her bump and grind me a bit and started to toy with her, then I tried to step back from her but she was most insistent, like a cat that would not let you be. But my philosophy was not to take advantage of vulnerable women, or insistent ones

at that. Insistent ones make trophies out of their conquests and I was not one to be considered a trophy, especially to a total feline. I did not know where that pussy cat had been and so I was not prepared to stroke her fur ... if you get my meaning.

She moved closer to me and straddled my leg with her insistence. Her thighs began to close in on my right leg. I slowly step back, drawing my knee up and extracted my leg from her clutch. Her dressed crawled up her leg as I did this and such enough she had nothing on underneath. She winked at me. I smirked back. Her eyes were now more glazed over than a moment ago. Her drink, her drugs and now her own hormones were getting the better of her and the night had yet to begin in earnest. I looked at her and wondered whether he life was always like this. Party ... party ... party ... The jewelry she was wearing was expensive and so I sensed she was some rich man's spoiled daughter. As we continued to bump and grind for another half minute I peered around the room to see if anyone was taking particular notice of her. I did not see any man keeping tabs on her.

Situations like that also lead to complications. I had come to chaperone my neighbor and planned to leave with her too. Besides I did have several other costumes and wanted the chance to slip them on and enjoy myself.

My life experiences have also taught me how to be suave and subtle. To dissuade her I started to back my way into the centre of the dance floor and it worked. A young beau glommed onto her and she turned her attention on him. Subtly sometimes works. When the set ended I was safely by myself

back at the piano. I smiled a second time at the young lady at the piano and this time she smiled back at me. I decided I needed a change of costume so I grabbed the bag and made my way to the men's room to make my first switch.

When I entered the men's room there were two men combing their hair and talking in front of the mirror. They were both wearing expensive suits. One of them gave me a weary glance in the mirror and went back to what he was saying. The other one was totally oblivious to the surroundings. It looked like he had just done a line or two of cocaine and was sniffing his ol snoz., one nostril at a time. I ducked into a stall and started to extract myself from the Shakespeare costume. It was awkward changing costumes and getting out of the tights. Given the commotion coming from the stall the two men probably wondered what was going on but they left me be. Half way through the change I heard the volume of music go up in the bathroom and I knew the men had opened the door and were leaving. I now had the room to myself so I opened the stall door, stepped out and proceeded to do a quick change. It was a struggle to get out of the tights. The next costume I had planned was the King of Thetis.

It was an interesting costume. I kept the string of pearls but had no shirt. I wore a leather belt that kept a brown netting skirt in place (I had picked it up at a second hand clothing shop) and I replaced the clogs with sandals. As I stood in front of the mirror I wonder how much could be seen through the netting skirt and decided to keep my g-string underway on. I don't normally

wear such provocative underwear but this evening it sort of went with the costume.

Ready to re-enter the festivities I folded the Shakespeare costume into the bag and ventured back out into the world. When I got to the end of the hallway I paused before stepping back into the grand ball room. There was now many more people dancing and it took me a good few seconds for me to find my friend in the throws of the bump and grind. Just as I spotted her she, with her sixth sense, looked up and spotted me. She waved at me with her magic wand. I waved back. She was enjoying herself. She did not need me to chaperone her

It was a struggle for me to walk back to the piano. I had to trudge around or through a throng of lookys gathered on the fringes of the dance floor. As I passed one particularly unpleasant type in an Armani suit he blocked my way and frowned at me, giving me ‘the evil eye.’ I grinned back and in a chirpy and loud voice parried “Thetis ... King of Athens ...” I was speaking to dumb ears and it did not dawn on him what I was talking about “ you know ... from Shakespeare’s A Midsummer’s Night Dream ...” His girlfriend pressed up against him and let me walk past behind her, leaving me just enough room to brush past her behind. It took me two steps to inch past her, but I sensed she didn’t mind.

When I got back to the piano I look over at her and she was smiling in my direction. Then the young lady playing the piano spoke to me “weren’t you Shakespeare a moment ago.”

I turned to her and nodded.

“Who are you now? “ I told her. “What?” she said? I repeated. Still she didn’t seem to hear me. She shuffled over and glanced down at the piano bench next to her and I knew she was inviting me to join her. So I did.

I leaned over and spoke clearly into her ear “I am Thetis ... King of Athens ... from Shakespeare’s A Midsummer’s Night Dream ...” She nodded in acknowledgment. I looked at her off the shoulder black cocktail dress. “How come you are not dressed up in a costume?” I asked her.

She stopped playing the piano and turned to me. “My sister called me up this morning and invited to come to this. I didn’t have a chance to pick up a costume.”

“Too bad,” I said.

She looked down at my bag. “Got some more costumes in there?” I nodded.

“May I,” she asked and I said “sure.” She began to poke around inside my bag. She looked up in glee. “How many costumes did you bring?”

“Including William Shakespeare ... seven.”

“Seven!”

“Once I got started ... honestly, I couldn’t stop.”

She looked at the costume I was wearing and it was then that she noticed the netting in the skirt and could see what was underneath.

“See through eh?”

I nodded.

“Any chance you’ll take the g-string off?”

I decided to have some fun with her. “You wearing anything ... besides the cocktail dress?”

She looked at me for a second and leaned close and almost whispered “Just some panties ...”

I grinned at her. “You want me to take off my g-string ...”

She looked at me ... “So that’s the way this game will be played.”

“Yup ...” I smiled confidently.

She warmed to me and extended her hand and said “I am Samantha ... but you can call me Sam.”

I shook her hand and sat “Patrick ... just Patrick.”

She began to poke again in the bag. “You wouldn’t have a bra in there would you?”

“No ... no over the shoulder boulder holders ... why would I need one? But there is a Cashmere scarf ...”

She lifted it slowly out of the bag and saw that it was a good length. “This might do for a start.” She also pulled a piece of pink cloth out of the bag. “And what is this?”

“That’s for my last costume of the evening ...”

“What is it?”

“The blind Minotaur ...” I quipped.

“I have read Midsummer’s at school ... there is no Minotaur in the play.”

I smiled. There is ... and ... there isn’t. Thetis becomes the King of Athens after he slew the Minotaur. My version of the play has Thetis blinding the Minotaur and the Minotaur reforming and becoming repentant.”

“Oh .. “ She looked at the piece of pink cloth and then at me.

“It’s the loin cloth for the blind Minotaur.”

“This I have got to see!”

“I am here with a friend. She says if I put that costume on I am on my own. Six feet of a man with four inches of pink cloth is a bit too much for even her.”

“Girlfriend?”

“Just a friend who happens to be a neighbor. She is dressed as the faerie queen Titania.” I pointed her out in the crowd on the dance floor.

“I am just visiting from Victoria myself. My sister lives and works here in Vancouver.” She paused for a sec and looked at me admiringly. “Listen ... I would very like to try on a costume.”

“Sure ...”

Sam put her hand on my hand and continued. “Would you like to come and help me?”

My pulse quicken. “Sure ...” and so we both got up and I followed her out of the dance room and into the hallway beyond.

“Follow me,” she said and she started for the stairs.

“Where are we going?” She obviously knew her way around the place.

“I have been here before for an aunts wedding.” I followed her quickly up two flights of stairs and into an all but dark and quiet hallway. “This is the main banquet floor and there is a family change room down the hall.”

She found it in the dark and I was dragged into the dark room. The lock was turned on the door. There was a pause of a second or two and I could smell her perfume and hear her breadth. She leaned onto me and whispered into my ear. “Isn’t this delicious.”

“Yes,” I whispered back.

Then I could hear the sound of fabric being rubbed against bare skin. She leaned on me a second time and I could feel her breasts against my bare skin. She was warm and aroused.

I kissed her softly on her cheek and whispered “Let me help you with your costume.”

“You’re no fun.” She stepped back from me.

“Maybe later ... let’s put together a nice costume for you.” I searched for the light switch with my fingers. “Cover your breasts with your hand ... I am going to turn the light on now.”

There was a loud sigh and a waft of her perfume. I flicked the switch. There she stood with her hand on her hips with nothing on except a pair of fancy black lace panties and a pair of expensive evening shoes.

I admired her for a few seconds and then said “you know why God made women’s breasts?”

As she shook her head they giggled in unison.

“For love and for beauty and to make us men envious.”

She drew her hands up to cover herself, and blushed. “That is so romantic!”

“I am a romantic at heart Samantha ... and you are a very beautiful woman.”

I pulled the Cashmere scarf out of the bag and handed it to her. She turned around and made a halter top out of it and I tied it behind her neck for her.

“Comfortable?”

“Very ... you might not get the scarf back.” I kissed her in the nape of her neck.

“Oh ...” It sent shivers down her spine. I could see goose bumps on her.

She turned around. Her face was a bright red, as was her shoulders and the divide between her breasts. Her nipples were poking the cashmere. With one hand she covered her bosom and with the other she reached forward and I gave her the bag. “You choose what else you want to wear.”

Off in the corner of the family room was a small change table and she took the bag and turned it over, scattering its contents. Then Samantha started to poke among the different costume pieces, She gathered the pink pieces to one side and then took the aquamarine tights and another length of green material that had leaf imprints. “what is this for?” She asked.

“It is for the costume of the mischievous faerie Puck.” As I said this she turned around and looked at me.

“If you put this costume on, can I have the skirt you have on?” She asked.

I nodded and gathered up the Puck costume. Then I began to take the net skirt off. I smirked. This was the first time I would be sharing a piece of clothing with a woman.

“Why are you grinning like that?” I told her. I handed her the net skirt. By then I was standing in nothing more than a string of pearls, sandals and a g-string.

“Lovely!” She smirked at me. “Can I have the g-string too?”

My eyes shot up in surprise. “You are a saucy one!” I stood there for a moment contemplating the inevitable and then smirked right back at her. “Only if you trade me for your panties!”

She looked down at herself and then at me.

“If we are going to wear costumes ... let us make the most fun time of it!” As I said this I drew my thumbs to either side of my g-string hinting I was ready to be brazen and bold.

“Turn around,” she said.

“Why? Only a moment ago you had me in a passionate embrace.” She pursed her lips and so I turned and doff the g-string and handed it over my shoulder to her. I stood there bare ass for a moment.

“Marvelous ...”

“You think so?” I could hear movement behind me and try to imagine it in my mind’s eye. Off with one thing on with the next.

She handed me her panties over my shoulder and I glanced at them. They were very delicate and so I said “they are too tight a fit for me” and handed them back to her.

“Put something on ... please.” I put the bottom of the Puck costume, the fancy boxers that I used in the Shakespeare costume. Then I turned around.

There she was standing before me with a cashmere scarf as a halter and my g-string as her bottom. She realized how she looked and started to wrap the net skirt around her waist. I handed her the leather belt and she put that on too. While she did this I put the top part of the Puck costume on over my head. It was a piece of rectangular green fabric with leaves in the weave. To finish things off I rearranged the pearls over the costume.

Samantha was now pretty much in costume except for her expensive shoes, which being high heels gave her the appearance of a street walker. “I think you will have to ditch your shoes.”

She looked at herself in the mirror and giggled. I look quite a sight don't I?”

“You're in costume now!”

As I said this she leaned forward against the wall and framed me on both sides by her sensuous long arms. “And if they ask ...”

“You are Puck’s friend.” I whispered ...

“Am I now?” She looked into my eyes. I nodded and smiled. She came closer and closer to me, looking ever more deeply into my eyes. Her irises were dilated full wide. My blood began to boil and I began to stir and just as I thought she was about to kiss me the lights went out and she said “time for us to ...”

Her lips were warm, moist and inviting, and she was the one who tugged at the knot on her halter and let the cashmere scarf untangle itself.

Then I felt her hand down the front of me. I brought my legs together “Mmmmmm ... man,” is all she said.

My warm hands edged upward until I discovered the envies of her ... and in the background for the first time I noticed the dull, boom, boom, boom of the music coming up from the floor below. Or it could have been my heart pounding in my chest.

“WWW ... woman,” is how I responded to her.

She teased me and teased me and teased me some more with the mastery of a mistress in the game of love and just as I was about to climax she stopped.

Her hand slipped out and I felt her stand back from the wall. In the darkness I could hear her tie the cashmere scarf back into a halter. “I think we should go back and join the party!”

“In a minute,” I whispered. I was in no state to walk ...

She giggled.

“You are a scoundrel!”

“No I am not ... I am Puck’s friend.” She said this with a glee in her voice.

I let out a deep sigh. “You’re driving me crazy!”

“Am I now!” She was having fun. “Almost ready to go?” She didn’t wait for an answer the door swung open and the light from the hallway fell into the room. She gathered up her dress and I had just enough time to gather the things on the table and stuff them back into the bag before she was leading our way down the hall and back down the flights of stairs to the dance floor.

When we got there, it was a jungle. There must have been twice as many people now as there were when we had last seen it. The room was hot with bump and grind. I could not find my friend anywhere in the mass throng of animals.

But that didn't stop Samantha. She dragged us through the throng to the piano, plunked her dress down under the grand piano, tore the bag out of my hands and tossed it next to her dress. Then back into the throng she dragged us both. I could hardly move let alone breath.

"Sam ..." I yelled. She didn't hear me. I tugged at her hand and yelled her name a second time. "Sam ..."

She brought her mouth close to my ear and yelled "what?"

I brought my mouth close to her ear and spoke clearly "I can't take this mob ... let's go someplace else." I tugged on her arm for emphasis. She did not resist. It took a good minute to disentangle ourselves from the throng and in that brief time I swear two women copped a feel of me as we past them. Uggh ... If a man did that to a woman he would be set to jail, or worst.

We both found a not so crowded corner to the room, opposite from the entrance and in front of a large brass sculpture. She was in front of me, pressed against my body and the sculpture pocked me in the back.

She turned her head and spoke "how's this?"

"Much better."

"There's my sister." She pointed to someone in the mob.

“Oh ... which one is she?”

“The woman in the yellow dress?” There were perhaps six women in the room wearing yellow. Samantha pointed again and this time I think I made her out just as she stepped out from the mob and started across to us.

“Hey sis ... where’s the dress I lent you?”

“Under the piano.”

“Under the piano? Where did you get this costume?”

“Puck gave it to me.” It was then that her sister noticed me standing behind Samantha.

The woman in the yellow dress looked directly at me with stern eyes. “You taking good care of my little sister.” As she said that I felt Samantha’s hand reach down and grab the back of me.

I was so surprised all I could do is nod.

“The cat got your tongue?” Sam’s older sister asked.

Sam squeezed me. “Something like that!”

“Huh?” Sam’s sister was obviously not impressed with me. Samantha was starting to tickle me.

“Having a good time?” Samantha asked her sister.

“Not bad. And you?”

“I am having a marvelous time.” As Samantha said this, her hand started to move with a slow rhythm. Now I knew why she took me up to near the point of climax. My legs closed over her hands. She was going to do this a second time.

“You scoundrel” I whispered into her ear.

The sister turned to me and asked “you said something?”

Samantha stepped in “He called me a scoundrel ...”

“Oh ... why?”

“I have his cock in my hand and I am teasing him.” Her big sister raised her eye brows in surprise, looked me in the eyes. I smiled meekly. She said nothing and turned away. Samantha’s sister did not look back as she rejoined her friends.

It was only then that I realized she was with two other unusual looking women wearing pink chiffon dresses and large Buffon blonde wigs. Even from across the somewhat darkened room I could tell their faces were made up, and their lips were painted a bright color. Samantha's sister said a few words to her two friends, pointing at us as she spoke, and the three women looked back at us. One of them then started to walk towards us. The other two joined her a few steps back.

As they approached I pleaded. "Samantha ... I think you better stop." She acted as if she didn't hear me.

"Please ..." I was very near ... too near, the precipice. But she knew that.

The three women were now upon us. And just as I was about to give that first involuntary spasm Samantha removed her hand. Samantha stepped away from me and turned around. In my excited state I had to now stand at the very sharp edge of the precipice as four beautiful women surrounded me.

"Let me introduce Puck ..." Samantha was having her fun with me.

"Puck?" One of the two eccentric women parroted. I looked at her lips as she said the word. Up close in the dim light I could see that they were painted a bright red.

"The faerie Puck from Shakespeare's play ..." Samantha smirked at me.

“Are you a faerie?” The other stranger sang the words, pivoting on one of her feet and touching her hair as she said this. I looked at the two eccentric women and they looked like bookends.

“Only for tonight ... I like woman, really I do.” I still stood at the precipice, with my toes curled at the edge, but I was still holding my own. But to make matters worse I was in my full glory and I knew the four women noticed this.

“We can see that,” Sam exclaimed pointed down at my bulge.

“Sam!” Her sister was horrified. Her two friends glanced down and giggled.

“Puck, let me introduce the Wilson sisters to you, Annemarie and Rosemarie.”

I looked at the two women and could not see any difference. “Which is which?”

Samantha looked at them, “gee ... I don’t know.”

The two sisters raised a hand to their mouth and giggled looking at each other as they did. “We are identical twins,” one of them said. The other finished the sentence “... and we share everything ... even our boyfriends, don’t we sis?”

“Huh!” I was amused with her comment.

The right hand sister said “sometimes we even swap and compare notes don’t we?” She looked over at her other sister who responded “yes we are very, very close.” The two of them stepped forward and took station on either side of me, each taking an arm. My toes were still curled and so, I let out a deep sigh.

“Are you ok?” Samantha asked. I gave her the evil eye.

Sam’s sister looked at her and said “you know he is right, you are a scoundrel!”

The two sisters, hearing the word leaned forward and looked past me to their sibling, then turned to Samantha and her sister. One of the Wilson girls asked “in what way?”

Samantha’s sister turned to Sam and pointed to her. “It’s best you ask her.” I gulped and slightly shook my head, pursing my lips. The two twins did not notice this, but Samantha and her sister did.

Sam had a mischievous grin on her face and all I could do was close my eyes and admit that this was a real Midsummer’s Night Dream!

“I have been teasing him ... in the worse sort of way,” she admitted.

“Have you now,” one of the twins exclaimed. I could feel the two women caressing my bare arms with their soft hands. The other sister then said. “let’s have fun too,” and giggle.

I looked at her and googled my eyes. She roared with laughter. “I love him ...” she exclaimed. The other sister was not to be left out and gave a tug on my arm and I looked at her and did a google eye for her two.

The two sisters started to tug at my arms as if I was a rag doll they were fighting over.

I tugged back. “Be careful ... I am not a wish bone!”

Samantha smirked at me ...”are you so sure?” looking down at the best of me. Suddenly the four of them were checking me out, a second time. I could tell I was still fully there. I crossed my legs and wanted to lean back but the statue was poking me in the back. The twins giggled in unison.

“Can’t you go dance?” There was a bit of spite in my words.

“Or something ...”, one of the twins quipped. “Yes,” the other one said, “or something.” They giggle in unison.

“We’ll come back later,” Samantha’s sister said. “We will leave you two faeries in peace.” I flared my eyes in thank you as Samantha’s sister tugged

on the twins and guided them back towards the throng. This left Samantha and I facing each other in the corner.

“Come ... come,” she was not letting up. “That was not that bad.”

“I have been at the very edge for ages ...”

“I know ...” Samantha smiled mischievously. “So have I!” It was then that I looked down and noticed she was too.

“Oki Dochi ...” I said.

“More like dochi dochi ...” She giggled as she said this. Samantha turned around and stood beside me as we both looked back into the wild party. She leaned over and whispered into my ear. “I am so hot!”

“Then let’s get some air,” I responded.

“Yes, let’s.” She took hold of my hand and we began to trudge our way at the edge of the crowd and out of the hot and bothered room. Out of the corner of my eye I spied my neighbor still dancing wildly in the madness.

Next there were a series of smaller rooms that branched out from a wide corridor. We made our way slowly past the gaggle of lookys that were gathered clogging the entrances of each small room. They were enthralled watching the cabaret going on within each small room. In one there were

colorful and lively jugglers performing. In another, there were two belly dancers, dressed in brightly bangled coin skirts hard at their art bouncing their ample bosoms and their hips – their perfect bodies – in time with the Lebanese music.

In a third there was a topless woman wearing pasties doing a pole dance. A portable CD player was filling the room with classical music. Mozart, I thought, from the Elvira Madigan piano concerto. It was hard to tell given the much louder music being carried down the hallway from the other dance floor. She danced lightly and with grace. Scattered around her were the rainbow of scarves she had peeled off as she performed. She was hanging upside down near the top of the pole held up by her legs wrapped around the shiny brass pole, her arms outstretched in joy. Her breasts were not so grand as to sag in her present inverted state. She moved swiftly, fluidly and with confidence from one pose to the next, hanging expertly near the top of the pole. I hadn't expected this but she suddenly peeled off the pasties and threw them with fan fair and enthusiasm to two appreciative men in the audience. Then at the very end of her performance she tugged at the ribbon at the edge of her panties and they fell off of her and fluttered to the floor. She was as pink and pretty like a peach.

She reverted and then hung motionless from the pole by her arms, keeping her legs together but nonetheless presenting the fullness of her for the audience to admire. As I watched her performance end I thought back to the film *Eyes Wide Shut*. When she stepped off the pole she took one step forward, bowed to her appreciative audience, stood up covering her breasts

with one hand and her intimates with the other. Then she turned her back to the room and quickly donned a pink robe. The room emptied in a flash leaving her all but alone. Then she walked over to the door and was about to close it when she saw Samantha and I just outside the door and beckoned us in, then closed the door behind us.

“You were marvelous,” Samantha said enthusiastically.

“Was I,” the pole dancer responded. I nodded and smiled appreciatively as she had retrieved her panties and put them back on. Then she slipped out of her robe and put a bright pink t-shirt on that she took out of her bag. She dropped the robe over the bag and turned back to us.

“Want to try?” she asked Samantha reaching over for her arm just in case she might say no.

“Well, if you insist.” There was a reluctant edge to her words.

“It’s easy, let me show you.” And so for a few minutes the pole dancer demonstrated some of the simple steps to her artistry. With amusement I watched them both from across the room.

“That will never do ...” The pole dancer said watching the awkwardness of Samantha’s halter. “Here ...” the pole dancer took something from her bag and handed it to Samantha. “Put these on.”

Samantha looked at them and said “I couldn’t!”

“What are they?” I asked her. The pole dancer responded “They’re pasties.”

“Yes Samantha ... put them on!” She looked down at what she was holding and before she could back out the pole dancer was there in front of her undoing the knot on her halter top. “I’ll put them on for you ...”

I watched the two of them and thought how wonderful it was for two perfect strangers to be on such intimate terms so easily.

“There ... much better, don’t you think?” The pole dancer was looking over at me. I nodded for both women to see. The pole dancer turned back to Samantha and said, “I will put some music on and you can dance for us.”

“What if some stranger comes in?” She was fishing for some excuse.

“Don’t worry love ... I will lock the door,” which she did, then the pole dancer walked over to a portable CD player and chose a pleasant piece of classical music, Beethoven’s *Moonlight Sonata*, for Samantha to dance to. My eyes were on her as she kept time with the music. The slow and deliberate tempo and her youthful exuberance was very erotic.

The pole dancer came and leaned against the wall beside me as we both watched Samantha dance. When the Beethoven finished something by Bach began to play.

“I think your girl friend dances ballet,” the pole dancer said.

“I would not be surprised.”

The pole dancer slowly turned her head and asked “don’t you know.”

“No I don’t. I just met her earlier this evening. She is not my girlfriend. She IS a lot of fun.” I emphasized the word IS.

The pole dancer looked at my costume. “You don’t look so bad yourself. Who are you suppose to be?”

“Puck ...”

“A faerie ...” She said it as a sort of inquiry.

“But just for Midsummer’s ...”

“Just for Midsummer’s ...”

I nodded. “Yes ... just for tonight ...”

The pole dancer turned to me and said. “That’s nice ...

I hadn't yet take notice what was written on her pink t-shirt. I glanced down and saw it said "I am a force of nature." I also noticed that she was very aroused.

"Mind if I have some fun with your friend?"

"Not at all ... I'll just watch."

The music was now a lovely Nocturne by Chopin. The pole dancer waltzed back to the pole, doffed her t-shirt and proceeded to dance with Samantha. Well, it was more of a flirt than a dance and it was very beautiful to watch. The two women were oblivious to my presence, but I didn't mind that.

It was then that I realized that I was still precariously standing at the edge of things. It felt so warm and delicious. The two women danced together for about twenty minutes, the room filling with the warmth of their love.

Ironically, the final track on the CD was Mendelssohn A Midsummer's Night Dream. When it was over the two women had come to an embrace and were giggling like little girls.

"You must leave me your number," the pole dancer asked of Samantha.

"Yes .." she nodded with enthusiasm. "That was so much fun!"

"You can come to dance with me whenever you want."

“I’d like that ...” Even from across the room I could tell Samantha was ...d ochi dochi ... They both were.

“And bring your friend her.” The pole dancer wagged her thumb at me.
“Maybe we can show him how to pole dance?”

Samantha all but staggered across the room and leaned on the wall beside me. I glanced at her and wondered if she was going to leave the pasties on or maybe wrap herself back up in her cashmere halter. I did not have to wait long. The pole dancer needed them back.

“I have one more set for the night ...” I turned away from and did not watch Samantha as she peeled them off herself and handed them to the pole dancer. Nor did I watch while she put her halter back on. As the pole dancer put the pasties on I noticed what they looked like. They were pink daisies with their centers cut out so that the nipple showed through.

“How ingenious” I said.

“Aren’t they! I make them myself. I make all my costumes!”

“You must have quite a collection,” I heard myself saying.

Samantha quickly turned back to me and said “let’s leave her alone ... she has to get ready for her next performance.”

She took my hand and was about to make a dash for the door when the pole dancer said “but don’t leave until you have given me your number.” She walked over and drew an appointment book with a pen tucked up in it from her bag. “Write your name and number here love and I will call you.”

Samantha wrote her name and number in the appointment book and handed it back to her. She offered it to me and I did the same. Then I handed it back to the pole dancer. “Samantha and Patrick ... the three of us can get together in my studio sometime and have more fun.”

Just as she said that there was a knock at the door. There was a muffled man’s voice. “Any one in there?”

The pole dancer opened the door to a man dressed in a formal black evening jacket. “Ah there you are ... still one more performance to go for the evening.” The man looked at the two of us. “Will they be performing with you?”

“Not tonight bob ... maybe some other time.”

“We were just leaving ...” I said. Samantha and I both slipped past the man so as to not be drawn into their conversation.

Samantha turned to me. She was flush and bothered. “I think I am the one who needs some air now.”

“I see you do.” I offered her my hand. “Lead the way.”

I smiled gleefully as I followed Samantha up the stairs to the next floor. The smile was a mixture of ‘look at how much fun we were having without having to drink’ and ‘what awaits us next?’ As we strolled by the lookys on the stairs the men were checking her out and their bored dates were stealing a glance at me. I was smiling like a peacock and didn’t really care what they thought was on my mind. Why? Because, odds are they were probably right!

Compared to what we have just experienced, the next floor was staid and a disappointment. There was a wet bar, crowded with people at one side and a large billiards lounge on the other side. At the far end of the hall was a fancy stained glass wall with a set of shiny large size brass doors what appeared to open to a dining room that was closed and its lights turned off.

Samantha steered us into the billiards room which had an open portico and no doors. There were four large billiard tables covered in bright green billiard baize and at the table furthest from the entrance there were two costumed women who were just about to start a game.

“Do come join us,” one of them insisted.

I looked over at Samantha and shrugged my shoulders. She nodded and so I said “we would love to.” We walked over and made introductions all

around. The two women were in their early twenties. One was dressed as a pink cat and the other as a pink dog. The pink cat introduced herself as Constance and the pink dog as Prudence, friends from school. They were dressed in bright and flashy full body costumes which did not show much skin apart from a little bit of arm and ankle.

Almost immediately after the niceties Constance broke the triangle of balls with skill, scattering the billiards around the table.

“You’ve played this game before,” Samantha said.

“A few times! My uncle taught me billiards.” She had an interesting English accent.

“At an English pub no doubt!” I stated. “And Prudence?” I enquired.

“Call me Pru ... only my grandmother calls me Prudence.”

“She would, wouldn’t she,” Constance tossed out. Prudence gave her friend a sharp glance. “An inside joke ...”

Before she could say more, Prudence took charge. “Conny no!”

Constance had a smirk on her face. “Well if you insist! Your turn Samantha.”

“Call me Sam.” Samantha took careful aim and knocked a billiard ball into the far corner pocket.

“I am surrounded by pool sharks ...” I said with a false air of exasperation.

She missed at her next shot. Sam gave me the evil eye, as if I had jinxed her.

Prudence went next and almost sunk a ball, the white ball. It trickled to a stop at the lip of one of the pockets. “Oops!”

At my turn I had nothing really to shoot at so I gave the white ball enough English to scatter a half dozen of the balls all over the table. I took the shot hoping something nice would happen, but no joy.

“You play an aggressive game there Patrick,” It was Constance stepping to the table next to me. “Letting the balls drop where they may?” She looked down at me as she said this. “Nice costume.” As she leaned onto the table to address the white ball her elbow brushed against my hip. I stepped back. She looked up at me and smiled warmly. “Come bring me luck,” and with her free hand guided me to stand and stoop over behind her. I had my left hand on the table and the other on her right shoulder. I looked across the table and saw that Samantha was taking the whole thing in with some amusement.

Constance pushed herself back against me and could not help noticing my state of excitement. She turned “Lovely isn’t this?” Then she whispered into my ear “let me tell you a secret ... Pru is a virgin.” When she said that she sent the white ball on its way across the green blaise and pocketed another ball with a loud retort. I stood up and so did she.

Samantha stepped to the table and invited Pru to bring her luck. But she missed on her next tap of the white ball. The white ball bounding back off the far bank and just as it was about to lose its way kissed a billiard. Prudence stood up and sighed heartedly, then said “I guess I am not good luck!”

“Nonsense Pru ... don’t be such a prude!” I could see that Constance enjoyed needling her friend. “Your turn. Patrick will bring you luck!”

I walked over and stooped behind and over her. I let Pru chose her lie. She look back at me as I brought myself close to her and felt the warmth of her body and smelled the faint scent of lavender. With one hand I leaned against the billiard table and with the other I took her hips into my possession. “Take your time,” I whispered into her ear. As I said this she moved her hips back and forth to get more comfortable. She did not back into me like Constance had and I wondered whether I should step a tad forward. I decided to leave things be.

I was good luck because Prudence sank the ball she was aiming to sink. Together we moved and took a second shot. This time she backed into me and took her time before she missed.

“See Pru ... a good boy does bring good luck.” Constance giggled as she said this.

It was now my turn. Pru handed me her billiards cue and I chalked it up a bit and settled in for my shot. Then I turned to Pru and said to her “come bring me some luck.” She slowly and meekly stepped forward and I had to encourage her to come closer. She leaned on the table and I took one of her hands and placed it on my bare stomach, giving her a chance to become even more intimate. We were both warm to our touch. I aimed carefully and sank a ball.

“Nice shot ... you have played billiards too.” Conny was genuine in her praise.

“My grandfather taught me how to play when I was a young boy.” I replied.

When we took our up next place together I whispered in her ear “Conny told me you are a virgin.” As I turned back to concentrate on my shot I could feel that Pru was more courageous. She dropped the edge of her hand down inside my boxers to catch the crown of the best of me. I took a long time to take the shot, moving myself a few times back and forth across the edge of her hand. Then she took the hint and tremulously grasped hold of me. “I

whispered “That’s much better, don’t you think?” It was only then that I took my shot and needless to say, because of the distraction, I missed entirely. From their places across the table neither Sam nor Conny had any inkling what Pru had just enjoyed. She let go and we stood up together.

“Here ... take the stick,” I said with a smirk on my face. I turned to her and handed her the cue. She put her hand on mine and held it there a second or two then I let her have the billiard cue. “Isn’t this fun?” sang Pru.

Pru smiled and nodded.

Constance stepped up to the billiard table and surveyed the room. “Who will bring me luck?” I was half expecting Samantha to take the honors but it was Pru who answered her call. Before she set herself Constance asked her friend “Aren’t you glad you came to the party?”

Pru giggled. “Yes ... very!” She gave her friend a hug and Conny missed her shot.

I walked over and brought some luck to Samantha. I placed my hand on the cashmere between her breasts. She felt warm and had a particular fragrance that I knew were her pheromones. I settled very close to her. She missed her shot. “There look at what you made me do ... you rogue you,” and pushed me away. She did this playfully. I walked around the table play acting that I was offended by her actions. “What did I do?”

“Distracted me ... in the worse way!” She smiled appreciatively and stepped back from the table and leaned back against the wall. Samantha brought her hands up the cue and rested her chin on them.

Some players drifted into the room and were gathering to start a game at another table. I glanced over and saw four male looky's. Boring I thought.

It was Pru's turn and she insisted that Conny bring her luck. Just as she was about to shoot Pru whispered something into Conny's ear and by the way Conny looked at me I knew what it was she had said.

Then it was my turn and all three women vied for the honors, for three similar reasons. I was emitting my own pheromones and they were picking up on them. Samantha drew the honors. She caressed my body with hers as I tried to concentrate but I missed and scratched, the distraction was so great!

We had another round with no balls sunk. I was surprised that Pru did not want to bring me luck this round. It would be Conny who would be edgy with me. Obviously Pru had let on what had pleased her.

I decided to tease Conny on her next try and I did ... placing my hand down the edge of her costume past her panties to her bare thigh. It was done so surreptitiously that no one but Conny and I knew of it. She did not flinch. She opened her thigh a bit, inviting me inwards and so I let my fingers glide down the slope to the forest of her. She was moist and warm. I drew my

finger just once up her as she took her shot. She was steely eyed for the ball went straight in. We moved to another shot and I teased her again, again with one finger. She sank a second ball. When I teased her with two fingers on her third shot, she missed, but I didn't. She let out a silent groan, which Samantha and Pru figured was disappointment, but Conny and I knew it was anything but.

Pru stepped forward to bring me good luck. She was very bold now, wanting to grab more of me. I let her jingle my change for a few seconds, but she pinched me and it hurt. I brought my legs together trapping her hand. I took the shot and sank a ball. I opened my legs and she quickly disentangled herself from me. I stood up and said, "I have to pee." I turned, frowned and handed Pru the cue. Then I turned to Samantha and asked her to take my shot. "I will be right back."

I strode quickly from the room and ducked into the men's washroom down the hall. The pinch had really hurt. It was then that I realized how tired I was and how it was perhaps time to find my neighbor and perhaps take out leave from the party. She was thinking the same thing, for as I stepped from the men's room back into the hall there she was looking for me.

"Where have you been?" She was shining with perspiration.

"Playing billiards." I said.

“I figured as much ... this is why I came up here looking for you. Finished your game?”

I smiled as she said that. “Almost ... come I will introduce you.” I led the way into the billiards room and there the three women were still continuing their game. I made polite conversation as I introduced Titania to Puck’s friend and the two pink pets.

“It is time for us to go ...” my neighbor said. “Glad I caught him in time ... I was worried he had on his Pink Minotaur’s costume.”

Samantha piped up. “I would love to see you in that costume!”

“You’ve seen it have you?”

Samantha nodded and turned to the two women in pink. “A pink loin cloth. A pink tail and ears, a pink eye blind and well ... 6 feet of Minotaur and four inches of cloth.” The women all giggled and then turned to glare at me.

Samantha turned to the three women “you hang on to him and I will go get it.” I put up a meek struggle but my fate was sealed. Besides I was curious to see the effect it would have on the crowd. It was a brief spell before she was back with her dress in one hand and the bag in the other. Samantha set down her bag in a corner and then dug the costume out of the bag.

“Well girls ... shall we?” Samantha took the lead.

“What here?” Pru exclaimed.

“Why not?” Conny smiled from ear to ear.

They were not just all around me. They were holding me here too. I felt trapped.

It was Samantha that tugged at my boxers. Gladly my full glory was partly hidden by the top of the Puck costume. I don’t know how she did it but she managed to wrap me in the pink loin cloth. Maybe it is a girl thing? Then she tucked the tail into the back of the loin cloth. Off came the top of the Puck costume and there I stood with four inches of loin cloth being admired by the four women. Samantha put my ears on me and then I let her blind fold me and well, I was very much in their keep.

“What now?” I said, as if I needed to be told.

“We’re leaving aren’t we?” It was my neighbor who ventured the obvious, And the four of us will take you down and to the taxi.

The four women guided me back down the stairs, weaving in and out of the many revelers either ensconced on the stairs, or travelling hither and thither. The remarks were priceless.

Then we had to run the gauntlet of the dance floor and as we bore through the crowd I could feel hands tugging at the little pieces of cloth between me and my immodesty. I could also feel the soft hands of many a woman play across my body. My arms were trapped. I could not hold things up! I was utterly defenseless as I felt the insistent tug on my loin cloth. I don't know exactly when it happened but I felt it start to come unwound and finally fall away. The whistles and cat calls were deafening. The grabbing at me was like birds pecking at bread crumbs. It was a feeding frenzy.

I was about to scream when I felt the coldness of some cloth wrap itself around those vulnerable parts of me. My arms were let loose and I drew the blind away from my eyes. I was immersed in a sea of bump and grind. I reached down and realized that Samantha had wrapped her black cocktail dress around me. She grabbed onto my arm and the three other women formed a wedge of sort through the crowd.

Their thin edge was fine, but the masses collapsed back on me as we made our passage. The fingers were stilled grasping for the bareness of me. It was past being a frenzy. It was now a fury. My heart beat madly in my chest. I began to panic. I began to have an anxiety attack.

I began to drown in a sea of folly. The bump and grind ... the faces, the smells the noise ... it was my worst nightmare. It felt like we were not making any progress what so ever through the throng.

What are the last thoughts of a drowning man? ... this evening it was the pole dancer and that she was as pink and pretty as a peach. And as if by miracle there she was beside me.

“Hang on to me ...” she yelled into my ears. And like an Amazonian she pushed her way through the frenzy, finding every crevice and every advantage she could to save this drowning man.

And then a miracle happened. Two actually. We were out of the frenzy and I was still clasping tight to the black cocktail dress, now tattered, around me. I could feel the scratches of the many grabs at me, like teeth marks from hungry piranha.

I was breathing in lungful of air. “Thanks ... I gave an asthmatic cough. Then another.

“Are you ok?” My neighbor asked me. I shook my head. “I didn’t think we could make it. I thought I was a goner!”

The pole dancer turned to the women and said “you were silly to throw the meat to the hungry animals.” There was an awkward pause. “What were you thinking?

It was Samantha who spoke. “We weren’t think ...” She looked at her compatriots then said ”we are so sorry.”

“I just want to put something on and then get the hell out of here.” I grabbed the bag and stepped behind a large potted palm and put myself back into the Shakespeare garb sans the cashmere sash. I emerged after a minute a fully clothed courtier.

The four of them were there waiting for me. “My apartment is just up the street,” the pole dancer said. “If you come over I can tend to your scratches and you can crash there too. You look exhausted”

“I am!” I was exhausted but I recognized a truly genuine gesture when I saw one. I looked at my compatriots and smiled. “Do you have room for four or five?”

I looked over at my neighbor. “Working tomorrow ... can’t come.”

“I’ll call you tomorrow then,” I said to her. “Thank you for inviting me to this party. It was fun except for the last ten minutes. My neighbor gave me a quick hug and then stepped out into the street to hail a taxi. That left the five of us.

The pole dancer smiled. “If you are hungry I can pop a quiche in the oven and make some coffee.” That brought smiles to everyone’s face.

Samantha said what was on our minds ...”it can be our after party ... party. Do you have a pole at your place?”

The pole dancer nodded. “Of course, and some lovely music too.”

We walked through the grand doors, down the stairs to the stares of the Lookys and made our way down the street into Gas Town: One man dressed as Shakespeare, two pink female pets, a girl dressed as Puck’s friend and one gorgeous woman sporting a bright outfit leading the way.

That night, as it turns out, was still quite young and well the enjoyments we shared are a story for another telling. But let me ask you have you every slept in a bed in the best suit you own with four lovely creatures of the opposite sex in the best suits they own. Even William Shakespeare would find it hard to put such sensual pleasures into words.

Yes, that night was very much a Mid Summer’s Dream.

Life In Paradise ...



Magazines by Obelisk Press

Le Minotaur
Pen & Pencil Magazine
Poetic Voice Magazine
Art & Eros Magazine
L'Espionage
Dada Magazine
Genius Magazine
Neos et Le Suralisme

Affiliated Publishing Houses

Obelisk Press
Atelier Press
Pythagoras Publishing

Over 300 titles to choose from

